

THE
HUMAN
TOUCH

WITH FANTASY
AND POEMS

L. A. COMPTON-RICKETT

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THE HUMAN TOUCH

WITH FANTASY AND POEMS

BY

L. A. COMPTON-RICKETT

WITH A FOREWORD

BY

KATHARINE TYNAN

LONDON

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS

NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO.

1921

FOREWORD

LEONARD COMPTON-RICKETT is a young poet who is not afraid of having convictions and publishing them to the world. "The Human Touch," put on for two matinees at the Ambassadors, deals with the problem of vivisection, an unpopular subject, as anything that troubles the lazy world and awakes that annoying thing, Conscience, is bound to be. After the great, and we fear the misdirected energy of the War, English people are more supine than ever about facing things difficult and disquieting. Mr. Compton-Rickett's play had an excellent reception, but one doubts that it would ever have a long run. The modern world is too anxious to be healed to be nice in asking at whose expense they are healed—and Death, who wore a familiar and even friendly face during the War, has now in the general demoralization been put back in his proper place. The same knight-errantry has prompted Mr. Compton-Rickett in the motif of "The King of Hearts," which might have had a more general title, since Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs, and Spades, and their personages all figure in it. It has the spirit of true fantasy. It has humour, poetry, wit, and it has also real philosophy. The City Company on its last legs, which is redeemed by learning to do its business according to the fairy-tale, is a very happy conception. There is plenty of spectacle, and from the charming opening, as primitive as a mystery-play, to the end, which might be in modern London, the allegory is complete. This would be a charming play, not for the theatres, but for pastoral players, or it might be played by children—there is a touch of Puck in it, if also of Titania and Mustard Seed and Peasblossom.

The lyrics that follow are true love-lyrics, for the greater part. They are frank, honest and dignified love-songs. If the Only Fair is a little elusive, if "For ever doth she fly and he pursue," well, that is all to the gain of the poetry. The spirit is hardly modern. This lover has his illusions, his aloofnesses, his despairs. But he knows how to praise woman delicately and with a knightly spirit. His lyrics are what lyrics ought to be—brief snatches, winged with feeling. He has an equal achievement. If he has not his great moments he has not his low moments. He is deeply read in English poetry, and he is not without the classical spirit. An earlier book of his, published in 1916, "The Divine Drama," was more ambitious than the new volume, but it was less near to humanity and less concerned with common human things. The fairy drama, "The King of Hearts," will delight even readers who will not guess at the philosophy of it. To the unimaginative and the worldling it might seem mad or even fantastical, but behind the floweriness and the real beauty of it there is wisdom and vision, and there is the fearlessness of the Don, who appeared in the guise of the madman, apparently an arrow cast at the old Spanish chivalry, but survives as the exemplar of all that chivalry and gentleness stand for in the heart of man.

KATHARINE TYNAN.

PRESS EXTRACTS

“ The play (‘ The Human Touch ’) is interesting, its sincerity goes home. . . . As there are real human touches in the work, it may, with a little technical overhauling, make good in the provinces, and I feel certain that when the Author has learned his *métier* he will give us work of lasting value.”

—J. T. GREIN, *The Illustrated London News*.

“ When I am assured by a preliminary circular that a play is both humorous and dramatic, and centres round a strong love interest, I can as a rule feel confident that I am in for a flatulent and perfunctory affair. Much to my surprise, the promoters had some justification for their prospectus. The piece was fairly well written, reasonably constructed, and was quite full of interest.”

—SYDNEY CARROLL. *Sunday Times*

“ The Human Touch,” by Mr. Leonard A. Compton-Rickett, produced at the Ambassadors Theatre, is a strong and vivid appeal in the cause of humanitarian principles in relation to animals. The lesson is interestingly taught in a well-constructed story which reaches its climax in a vivisection laboratory—a situation of such power as to tug at the very heart-strings of the most callous. On its merit alone, apart from the principle involved, the play is worthy of a run.

—*The Star*.



AN APPEAL

TO THE WOMEN OF ENGLAND TO
VOTE AT THE GENERAL ELECTION
FOR THE ABOLITION OF VIVISECTION

Reprinted from "The Abolitionist," 1918

Glorious Woman, imaging on Earth
The archetypal goddess of pure grace,
Through passion's travail, inspirer of the Race,
Thy beauty now is big with second birth ;
For loveliness is love, and careless mirth
Hearing the World's cry changes on thy face
To tender sweetness, flashing with a trace
Of stern resolve, and heightening thy worth.

Sister of Mercy, freed by life's new dower,
Helplessness to thy robe's protection clings ;
Immaculate Mother to all living things,
The fateful time draws near, the splendid hour,
By thine own wrongs, thy silent sufferings
Keen as the spear of Pallas, strike with power.

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THE HUMAN TOUCH
A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

REV. ROBERT VERYVERY	<i>A Hunting Parson</i>
ESTHER VERYVERY	<i>His wife</i>
WENNA VERYVERY (Nicknamed PONY)	<i>His daughter</i>
DR. GUY WELBECK	<i>Distinguished in Medical Research work</i>
DR. VAGUS	<i>A Village Practitioner</i>
HILARY LARKSPUR	<i>An eccentric idealist</i>
AMELIA	<i>Maid at the Vicarage</i>
NURSE CROFT	
AN ASSISTANT	<i>At Dr. Welbeck's Labora- tory</i>

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Characters in the order of their appearance for the two Special Matinees at the Ambassadors Theatre, March 14th and 17th, 1921.

REV. ROBERT VERYVERY	C. V. FRANCE
MRS. VERYVERY	DORIS LLOYD
WENNA (their daughter)	ENID SASS
AMELIA (maid at Vicarage)	MARJORIE BRISTOWE
DR. VAGUS	ALFRED S. BARBER
HILARY LARKSPUR	ARTHUR VEZIN
DR. WELBECK	FRANKLIN DYALL
<i>(By kind permission of Messrs. Frank Curzon and Gerald du Maurier.)</i>	
LABORATORY ASSISTANT	CHARLES H. HOBSON
NURSE CROFT	BESSIE BEDFORD

Produced by Arthur Applin.

ACT I. STUDY AT THE VICARAGE

ACT II. SCENE I. SAME AS ACT I.

SCENE II. DR. WELBECK'S LABORATORY

ACT III. SAME AS ACT I.

THE HUMAN TOUCH

ACT I

SCENE I.—*Study at the Vicarage.*

TIME.—*After lunch.*

(*Window back. Fireplace L. Sofa R.C. Door R. Table and 4 chairs. On table are whisky bottle, syphon, pipes, tobacco jar, and periodicals. At one corner MRS. VERYVERY is DISCOVERED writing letters, at another corner MR. VERYVERY is seated smoking, finishing whisky, and reading "The Sporting and Dramatic News." Bookcases cover walls, except over fireplace, where a sporting picture is hung, and near window, where the painting of a cathedral is seen.*)

MRS. VERYVERY : (*dipping her pen in ink, and hesitating*) What can I say, Robert, to that impossible Mr. Larkspur? He's been sending me pamphlets again. (*Looks at them*) "The Endowment of Motherhood," and "Life without the Cook."

VERYVERY : (*deep in article*) What's that, my dear? (*arousing himself*) Larkspur?

MRS. VERYVERY : (*makes noise of assent*) He's not quite, is he?

VERYVERY : Oh yes. Intelligent in a way. Reads the Kabalah in a caravan all day.

MRS. VERYVERY : Why does he wear sandals ?

VERYVERY : (*drily*) That I can't say.

MRS. VERYVERY : There must be something wrong in his head, if he can't bear a hat on it, and goes about exhibiting his toes.

VERYVERY : He called here to deepen my theological views. I told him he might look in again for a book.

MRS. VERYVERY : And now Wenna's got to know him. They think him a freak in the Village. He's anti-everything, and a vegetarian, if you please.

VERYVERY : Many people would think more of me if I didn't smoke, didn't drink, didn't eat meat, didn't hunt.

MRS. VERYVERY : Nonsense, Robert.

VERYVERY : I should be out of touch with the parish. Clarke would grumble if I didn't get his tobacco. I shouldn't hear Paine's private trouble if I stopped ordering Old vatted Highland, and if we knocked off meat Bellum would glare at me every time I passed.

MRS. VERYVERY : Pray don't invite Larkspur here again, people will begin talking.

VERYVERY : Talking ?

MRS. VERYVERY : They may think Wenna and he---

VERYVERY : Why should they ?

MRS. VERYVERY : You wouldn't want him as a son-in-law. Now, Dr. Welbeck's got a London position and name. And he's really attached to Wenna.

VERYVERY : Welbeck's spent his holiday with us before now. If he wanted her he would have proposed.

MRS. VERYVERY : He's not the sort to rush into marriage. That's what I like about him, while Larkspur's wholly irresponsible. Besides, he'll damage her chances if Dr. Welbeck does mean anything.

VERYVERY : Not a bit. Welbeck will be more likely to find out his own mind.

MRS. VERYVERY : If Larkspur calls, tongues will begin wagging. You know what small minds people have. Gossip's the breath of life to them.

VERYVERY : (*reverting to paper*) Well, then, we oughtn't to suffocate them.

MRS. VERYVERY : And I distrust that man. He looks an atheist.

VERYVERY : He's got the call of the wild in his blood.

MRS. VERYVERY : I hope the wild won't call him here again. It's scarcely decent coming into a sitting-room with bare feet and sandals.

VERYVERY : I should prefer the homely boot myself.

MRS. VERYVERY : Dr. Welbeck would think him a perfect fool.

VERYVERY : Doctors aren't paragons. They're either for the knife or needle. I'd sooner die free of charge.

MRS. VERYVERY : And Wenna's just the girl to fall head over ears in love with some impossible freak.

VERYVERY : (*Putting down paper, and speaking emphatically*) Wenna's got a mind of her own. If she becomes enamoured of an ass, that ass she'll marry.

MRS. VERYVERY : And you'd be the last person to stop her.

VERYVERY : I don't tilt at windmills.

MRS. VERYVERY : You let her ride Black Magic.

VERYVERY : She insists.

MRS. VERYVERY : Nonsense, Robert ; you're weak. You'll say she insisted on breaking in Morning Glory.

VERYVERY : She did. And she manages Glory better than any of the grooms.

MRS. VERYVERY : Yes, and he thrèw her ! And Dr. Vagus keeps on coming. If she'd only had the accident three days later Dr. Welbeck would have been here to take the case. It might have been a most fortunate thing.

VERYVERY : Welbeck's had plenty of opportunities of admiring her ankle.

MRS. VERYVERY : We should have saved a doctor's bill too ; and she would have obeyed Dr. Welbeck.

VERYVERY : What's he doing now ?

MRS. VERYVERY : He's upstairs working or packing.

(ENTER WENNA, *limping slightly, with a St. Bernard dog.*)

VERYVERY : Ah ! Pony dear !

WENNA : (*To dog*) Where d'you want me to sit, Monarch ?

MRS. VERYVERY : Have you remembered the embrocation, Wenna ? Three times a day it says.

WENNA : Oh, we can't be bothered with all that, can we, Monarch, old boy ?

MRS. VERYVERY : Have you got the bandage on ?

WENNA : No, my ankle's hideous enough.

MRS. VERYVERY : You must obey doctor's orders.

WENNA : I won't have old Dr. Vagus snuffing and pinching me about any more.

MRS. VERYVERY : That's nonsense.

WENNA : What's the use of snuffing and fluffing and finally saying " appetite good ? " Silly old fool !

MRS. VERYVERY : Wenna !

WENNA : I can't help it, Mamma. I call it insulting to be asked how much you eat.

VERYVERY : Never mind, Pony. Doctors, like parsons, are privileged persons.

MRS. VERYVERY : The poor people love him, and say he's very clever.

WENNA: (*Murmurs*) He's got bushes coming out of his ears, and he eats onions. We don't love people with bushes, do we, Monarch? (*Sits on sofa.*)

MRS. VERYVERY: Lie up on the sofa, now. Your ankle's getting worse all the time your foot's on the ground.

WENNA: I hate lying up. It makes me feel an invalid.

VERYVERY: You'll be in the saddle the sooner.

(WENNA *makes a grimace, sighs, slowly puts up her feet and curls her arms round dog.*)

MRS. VERYVERY: I believe Dr. Welbeck preferred your photo at the loose box with Glory looking out than the one in your ball gown.

WENNA: (*Murmurs*) The dear thing's so intelligent.

VERYVERY: Glory or Welbeck?

WENNA: Oh, papa!

VERYVERY: Rivals Balaam's ass very nearly, eh?

WENNA: I'm sure he wants to speak, only he can't.

VERYVERY: He can say you neigh.

MRS. VERYVERY: (*To VERYVERY*) That's more than you can.

WENNA: (*Gets up and stands back of Veryvery's chair*) Oh, he could. You could be awfully terri-

fyng, dear old Papa, couldn't you? Just for a wee while. Then you'd laugh. I know you couldn't keep it up, and I should laugh too.

MRS. VERYVERY : A weak king is no king.

VERYVERY : The jovial one has his thunder-bolt.

WENNA : (*Flings her arms round him*) I believe you're too fond of pleasure, old thing, to have thunder-bolts—that's what I believe.

MRS. VERYVERY : Wenna !

WENNA : Oh, he's the sportiest parson that ever tried to look solemn in the pulpit. You look as if you'd burst with benevolence over the congregation like a ripe plum. (*Gurples*) A ripe plum, Papa.

VERYVERY : (*Patting her head*) I understand Pony's prattle.

WENNA : But the Village simply adore you, you radiant ruby, and they learn ever so much more religion by loving you than by any amount of dull doctrine.

MRS. VERYVERY : Hark ! That's the front door.

WENNA : If that's Dr. Vagus Plagus I won't see him.

MRS. VERYVERY : Wenna, get back to the sofa.

VERYVERY : (*To WENNA*) Take him like a dose.

WENNA : He's worse than his medicines.

VERYVERY : One, two, three.

(WENNA gets slowly back—ENTER AMELIA.)

AMELIA: Dr. Vagus.

MRS. VERYVERY: Show him in.

(EXIT AMELIA.)

(To WENNA) Only just in time, you see.

(MRS. VERYVERY blows her nose, and there is a general movement of preparation. ENTER AMELIA and DR. VAGUS. VERYVERY and MRS. VERYVERY rise.)

DR. VAGUS: (*Shaking hands with MRS. VERYVERY*)
Good afternoon, Mrs. Veryvery.

MRS. VERYVERY: Good afternoon, Doctor.

DR. VAGUS: (*To VERYVERY*) Good afternoon. (*They shake hands.*)

VERYVERY: Good afternoon.

DR. VAGUS: (*Shaking hands with WENNA*) And how's my Wild West patient, to-day?

WENNA: Quite well, thank you.

MRS. VERYVERY: I'm afraid, Doctor, she's an impatient.

DR. VAGUS: Well, not even doctors can put old heads on young shoulders.

MRS. VERYVERY: I wish my husband would put young shoulders on old horses. (*To DR. VAGUS*) What would *you* say if your daughter insisted on breaking in young horses?

WENNA : I don't call it breaking in when you've been friends from the start.

MRS. VERYVERY : But *I* do.

WENNA : Glory has the sweetest temper in the world. (*To DOCTOR*) He was frightened at one of those hateful little motor-bikes.

DR. VAGUS : Let me see whether the swelling's reduced.

(*Turns round to MR. and MRS. VERYVERY while WENNA takes off shoe and stocking.*)

As long as the horse isn't vicious.

MRS. VERYVERY : But our mare Black Magic *is* vicious, and she rides her too.

VERYVERY : My wife says, sell the brute. My daughter says, keep the darling. There you are.

DR. VAGUS : A bit wicked, eh?—like the ladies. (*Taking up pamphlet*) What's this? The imbecility of doctors or inoculation exploded?

VERYVERY : Oh, that's young Hilary Larkspur.

MRS. VERYVERY : I suppose you'd call him an anti-vivisectionist, Doctor?

DR. VAGUS : Thinks you an easy prey, perhaps. Does he know that experiments on animals have led to the discovery of the circulation of the blood, the function of the brain, digestion, treatment of diabetes and rickets; while terrible scourges like cholera, rabies and tetanus have been prevented?

VERYVERY : Never you try to poison me with your wonderful prophylactics. (*Under breath*) Marvellous messes.

WENNA : Monarch hopes you aren't a vivisector, Dr. Vagus. He wonders why I'm undressing here.

DR. VAGUS : Where are the bandages ?

MRS. VERYVERY : (*To WENNA*) You'll have to confess.

WENNA : I forgot the bandages. They make you look such a fright.

DR. VAGUS : If you were really ill I should be really stern. Vanity! young lady. I can remember being rather a dressy man myself. Always put the trousers under the mattress. Very particular about the crease. (*Examines and grunts*) The embrocation's done it good.

WENNA : (*With a laugh*) I forgot that, too.

(DR. VAGUS *starts.*)

Oh, I did rub a little on and Monarch licked it off again, or tried to. Didn't you, old thing? (*Looks up with a winning smile*) When can I go for a gallop ?

DR. VAGUS : (*With perplexed smile*) If you're good, to-morrow—

WENNA : (*Hugging dog*) Oh, how splendid !

DR. VAGUS : —week.

WENNA : Dr. Vagus, you *are* horrid.

DR. VAGUS : But get out into the open air. It's the only elixir of life.

VERYVERY : And riding's the best way of taking it. Nothing so healthy.

DR. VAGUS : If all my patients had your constitution, Veryvery——

VERYVERY : It's taking stiff fences and weak grog. That's my recipe. Why, here I am, nearly sixty and never had a day's illness in my life.

MRS. VERYVERY : Hush, Robert ! Don't boast.

VERYVERY : I'm not boasting, my dear. I'm gratefully acknowledging a fact in nature.

WENNA : (*Jumping up and touching table*) I'll touch wood.

DR. VAGUS : (*Preparing to leave, and addressing WENNA*) Mind now, don't let me meet you on Morning Glory before I call again. (*Pats Monarch*) You keep a closer eye on your mistress.

WENNA : (*Stroking dog*) He never takes it off me.

DR. VAGUS : (*Shaking hands with MRS. VERYVERY*) I sympathise with you, Mrs. Veryvery ; the rising generation is a great responsibility.

MRS. VERYVERY : I know our child is.

DR. VAGUS : (*Shaking hands with VERYVERY*) You'll have to look after your Diana of a daughter next time she's scouring the country. (*Waving to WENNA at the door, while VERYVERY rings and*

opens door) I shall call you my lady Diana ;
an excellent name : and remember those feet of
clay.

(EXIT VAGUS.)

WENNA : Silly old fool.

VERYVERY : Wenna ! He'll hear you !

WENNA : Not with those bushes growing out of his
ears.

MRS. VERYVERY : You *are* rude. (To VERYVERY)
Robert, why don't you say something ?

VERYVERY : (*Starting up*) The devil ! I've for-
gotten Grainger's funeral.

WENNA : Oh, Papa.

VERYVERY : (*Looks at watch*) I've just got time.

(EXIT *hurriedly, muttering.*)

MRS. VERYVERY : Poor Grainger ! That's your father
all over.

WENNA : Papa's always forgetting funerals. I don't
think he can like them.

MRS. VERYVERY : I wish he disapproved of that Mr.
Larkspur.

WENNA : Hilary Larkspur ? What's wrong with
Hilary ?

MRS. VERYVERY : There's nothing *wrong* with him
except that he's a bee in his bonnet.

WENNA : I can't see Hilary in a bonnet.

MRS. VERYVERY : He isn't fit company for a young girl.

WENNA : Why ?

MRS. VERYVERY : He's not a Christian gentleman.

WENNA : (*Bursting out laughing*) Oh, Mamma !

MRS. VERYVERY : I'm going to see whether Wottle's is open and get some wool. It may be closed for Grainger's funeral. Poor Grainger ! To think he was at his shop door a week ago to-day.

WENNA : Poor man ! We had some nice talks about his rheumatism and his son, who had been to Mesopotamia.

MRS. VERYVERY : I hope Wottles won't be shut.

WENNA : Get the right wool this time, Mamma.

MRS. VERYVERY : I shall leave the pattern here while I put on my things.

(EXIT MRS. VERYVERY.)

WENNA *sighs*. *She reads a few lines, with an arm round dog, then looks at him fondly. A ring.*)

WENNA : (*To dog*) Don't you like me reading, old boy ? Dear old fellow ! (*Whispers in his ear*) " I only know I love you so, and there's no one else will do ! "

(ENTER AMELIA.)

AMELIA : Mr. Larkspur has called, miss.

WENNA : Does he want to see me ?

AMELIA : He asked if master was in. I said *you* were, miss, and he asked if he could see you a moment.

WENNA : (*Patting her hair meditatively*) Show him in, Amelia.

AMELIA : Yes, miss.

(EXIT AMELIA.)

WENNA *jumps up and preens herself in glass, returns to sofa, puts up feet and takes up book with arm round dog.* ENTER AMELIA and LARKSPUR *Latter in queer suit, and feet bare save for sandals*).

AMELIA : Mr. Larkspur.

(EXIT AMELIA.)

WENNA : Hullo, Hilary !

LARKSPUR : I hope I'm not disturbing you.

WENNA : Dreadfully. I was having a heart to heart talk with Monarch. He doesn't approve of some of your views.

LARKSPUR : Then he must take me in hand. Eh, my grand Duke. (*Pats dog.*)

WENNA : Where are you going to sit ?

LARKSPUR : That depends on you.

WENNA : I'm stopping here.

LARKSPUR : Then I'll take up my accustomed posture.

(WENNA sits on sofa and LARKSPUR sits on floor, crossed legged, partly facing sofa, partly audience.)

WENNA : All right !

LARKSPUR : And how is your ankle ?

WENNA : You don't mean to say you've heard of that ?

LARKSPUR : All the Village is talking about its darling dare-devil.

WENNA : (*Laughing*) It must be hard up.

LARKSPUR : That's no answer.

WENNA : Ever so much better. Almost well. Can't you see ?

(LARKSPUR glances at it and gives an uncertain grunt.)

LARKSPUR : I really came to borrow " The Bible in Spain " from your father.

WENNA : He's out.

LARKSPUR : I'll talk to you then.

WENNA : (*Sitting with feet down facing him*) Now, tell me about your caravan life.

LARKSPUR : No.

WENNA : Why not ?

LARKSPUR : My doings can't interest you.

WENNA : How absurd, Hilary.

LARKSPUR : Let's see, what's his name ?

WENNA : You mean Monarch ?

LARKSPUR : That's it. (*To dog*) You're a lucky fellow, Monarch.

WENNA : (*Looking at dog*) I'm the lucky one.

LARKSPUR : I expect he dreams of you.

WENNA : Then I'm a nightmare by his noises.

LARKSPUR : He makes me feel quite jealous.

WENNA : What ! jealous of Monarch ?

LARKSPUR : Yes.

WENNA : (*Vivaciously, as she hugs dog's head*) Then you'll have to be jealous of Morning Glory too.

LARKSPUR : And who's Morning Glory ?

WENNA : My Gee.

LARKSPUR : Ah ! that reminds me of the first time someone met someone else on horseback in the lane. Poor fellow ! His heart almost leapt out of his body. His one impulse was to rush after the rider and catch hold of the bridle.

WENNA : (*With excitement*) Did he do it ?

LARKSPUR : (*Slowly and sadly*) I'm afraid not.

WENNA : What happened ?

LARKSPUR : He merely stepped aside and watched them out of sight.

WENNA : How sad ! Was the vision a she ?

LARKSPUR : Yes.

WENNA : She might have stopped if she'd known.

LARKSPUR : Visions don't stop. They come like a flash of lightning out of the commonplace, and then—as you were.

WENNA : I'm sorry for your friend, but he'll see plenty of other visions on and off horseback.

(A moment's pause.)

LARKSPUR : I had better look for Borrow. *(Rises and moves to bookcase, pause.)*

WENNA : When are you going to show me over your caravan ?

LARKSPUR : Name the day. With your mother or not ?

WENNA : Not.

LARKSPUR : Right. Your friend won't mind.

WENNA : Who are you referring to ?

LARKSPUR : Dr. Welbeck.

WENNA : I do as I please—*(squeezing dog)* almost.

LARKSPUR : Good.

WENNA : You know each other by sight, I suppose ?

LARKSPUR : I've passed him once or twice down here. Of course, he's got quite a big name in London.

WENNA: It must be dull for doctors having to be always nice to people. Always hiding their feelings.

LARKSPUR: Other people have to hide their feelings.

WENNA: Do they? If I like a person I show it, and if I don't I show it.

LARKSPUR: That's called temperament in women.

WENNA: Papa likes everyone. Then he can't help it.

LARKSPUR: (*Sighing, looking at her*) It's awful when you can't help liking: when it sweeps you away.

WENNA: I don't mean what you mean.

LARKSPUR: What do I mean?

WENNA: (*Caressing dog*) Tell him not to be silly, Monarch.

LARKSPUR: I wonder what you'd think of Schopenhauer.

WENNA: Why? Had he temperament?

LARKSPUR: He'd a dog he called Nirvana (*under breath*), or Atma.

WENNA: Then I should have loved him.

LARKSPUR: He would probably have loved you.

WENNA: Instead of talking nonsense you must promise to stay for tea and meet Dr. Welbeck.

(LARKSPUR *sighs heavily.*)

Don't look cross.

LARKSPUR : I'm sorry. How long is he staying ?

WENNA : He goes back to London this afternoon.
He's frightfully keen on some research work.

LARKSPUR : (*Contemptuously sotto voce*) Research
work ! (*Aloud*) Yes.

WENNA : He says it's connected with fevers. I
suppose I shouldn't understand if he explained.

LARKSPUR : (*Altering his manner to one of gravity*)
I don't think I'd better meet Dr. Welbeck.

(ENTER MRS. VERYVERY.)

WENNA : Why not ?

LARKSPUR : It doesn't matter.

WENNA : I believe you're trying to annoy me.

LARKSPUR : (*Earnestly*) Annoy you ?

MRS. VERYVERY : Good gracious !

WENNA : Mr. Larkspur, Mamma.

LARKSPUR : (*Rising, with a slight laugh*) Oh, good
day. I called for a book that Mr. Veryvery kindly
promised to lend me.

MRS. VERYVERY : Had you dropped it on the floor ?

WENNA : Oh, no, Mamma. That's only the—what *do*
you call it, Hilary ?

LARKSPUR : I usually adopt an Oriental posture.
It's convenient when you travel without easy
chairs.

MRS. VERYVERY : (*Frostily polite*) Probably.

WENNA : Try it, Mamma. We'll help you up again.

MRS. VERYVERY : Don't be absurd, Wenna.

LARKSPUR : (*To MRS. VERYVERY*) With your permission I'll call for the book another day. I'm afraid I could not find it.

WENNA : I'll hunt it out and keep it for you.

(MRS. VERYVERY *rings*.)

MRS. VERYVERY : (*To LARKSPUR, who has crossed to her, as he shakes hands*). I've written to you about those interesting pamphlets. I ought to have replied before only—well, you don't know what it means to be a Vicar's wife.

LARKSPUR : (*Holding WENNA'S hand*) They really treat of very important matters that the general public never think about. (*To WENNA*) Good-bye.

WENNA : I won't forget the "Bible in Spain."

(ENTER AMELIA, *holds door open*.)

LARKSPUR : Thanks. (*Gives little bow to MRS. VERYVERY and WENNA*) Good-day.

MRS. VERYVERY : Good-day, Mr. Larkspur.

WENNA : Cheerio.

(EXIT LARKSPUR, L.)

MRS. VERYVERY : Why didn't he take that book with him?

WENNA : I suppose he was in a hurry.

MRS. VERYVERY : Hurry ! A paltry excuse to call again—to see you.

WENNA : How silly, Mamma.

MRS. VERYVERY : We don't want to encourage him.

WENNA : Why not ?

MRS. VERYVERY : He's one of those people who aren't gentlemen, and yet whom you can't keep in their place.

WENNA : He's good enough for Papa.

MRS. VERYVERY : Your father *has* to see those people. They're a clergyman's duty.

WENNA : I should hate to be a clergyman's duty. Besides, I asked him to stay to tea to meet Dr. Welbeck.

MRS. VERYVERY : (*Quickly*) You don't mean to say——

WENNA : Yes, I do.

MRS. VERYVERY : Wenna !

WENNA : Why not ?

MRS. VERYVERY : Why not ? Good gracious, child, you don't know anything about men. Dr. Welbeck will quite misunderstand.

WENNA : Who ? What ?

MRS. VERYVERY : (*Preparing to exit*) I hope Wottle's won't be closed for the funeral,

WENNA : You're forgetting your patterns, Mamma.

MRS. VERYVERY : (*Back to table*) I must be back before Dr. Welbeck leaves. I don't think you've given him much encouragement, Wenna.

WENNA : (*Hugging dog*) Oh, Monarch's my greatest pal.

MRS. VERYVERY : Lie up and rest all you can.

WENNA : (*To dog*) We'll be ever so good.

(EXIT MRS. VERYVERY.)

For five whole minutes.

(WENNA *takes bottle and reads label. Shakes it and feels ankle. Puts down bottle and rubs ankle. Takes up bottle and shakes it again.*)

Now, Monarch, you're to be very good while I do this. You're not to lick it off. You understand. (*Raises finger of right hand. Holds bottle in left.*)

AMELIA : (*Off*) She's in the study I think, sir.

(WENNA *dashes down bottle and grabs periodical.*)

(ENTER WELBECK.)

WELBECK : (*Whose speech is always deliberate*) So there you are.

WENNA : *We* are.

WELBECK : My apology to Monarch.

WENNA : I accept it for him.

WELBECK: Where is your father?

WENNA: Out.

WELBECK: And your——

WENNA: Out too.

WELBECK: I thought I heard——

WENNA: He's just gone out. Mr. Larkspur, you mean?

WELBECK: Oh, it was he?

WENNA: Yes. Came to borrow a book and went without borrowing it.

WELBECK: (*More gravely*) I see. (*Pause*).

WENNA: You been for a walk?

WELBECK: No.

WENNA: Then where've you been?

WELBECK: In my bedroom.

WENNA: Packing. I forgot.

WELBECK: No, I trundle my things in in five minutes. As a matter of fact, I was lying on my bed.

WENNA: Fast asleep?

WELBECK: Wrong again. Fast awake. Very wide awake.

WENNA: (*More seriously*) Not worried over a case, I hope.

WELBECK: Er, yes, if you like.

WENNA : Why if I like ?

WELBECK : I'm not sure it is a case.

WENNA : Not sure ? You're so exact usually. I always say you talk as if you were writing a prescription.

WELBECK : Nasty ?

WENNA : No, but it's all so thought out ; you never get excited or repeat yourself, or say what you don't mean, as people usually do.

WELBECK : I must be a dry stick.

WENNA : You're not at all. I think it wonderful. Now Mamma goes on and on.

WELBECK : (*Absently, looking at paper*) Where's she gone to ?

WENNA : To Wottle's for wool.

WELBECK : (*Abstractedly*) Ah yes, so you said.

WENNA : I only said she'd gone out. What is the matter, Dr. Welbeck ? Why, you're as worried as—worried.

WELBECK : Don't take any notice of me.

WENNA : I'll ring for tea.

WELBECK : (*Sharply*) No, thanks.

WENNA : (*With little surprised laugh*) All right. (*Stooping down to dog*) Monarch, we don't want our noses bitten off, do we ?

WELBECK : I'm sorry.

WENNA : I'm sorry for you, you look so anxious.

WELBECK : (*With effort*) What were we talking about ?

WENNA : About people talking. How they differ.

WELBECK : That was it. I talked like a book or something.

WENNA : I know why you've got a red ear.

WELBECK : (*Looking in glass*) Have I ? I suppose I laid on it.

WENNA : It's blushing because we were talking about you.

WELBECK : We ?

WENNA : Mr. Larkspur and I. I want you both to meet. He's a dear old Diogenes and quite clever in his way.

WELBECK : (*Throws down book and speaks nervously*)
Wenna !

WENNA : (*Quickly*) Yes ?

WELBECK : Er—I'm going back this afternoon.

WENNA : I know you are. (*Looking down nervously*)
I wish you weren't.

WELBECK : (*Looking away*) Thanks. (*Pause*).

WENNA : I hope this—case won't undo all the good your golf has done.

WELBECK : That depends.

WENNA : Have you been secretly worrying about it all your holiday ?

WELBECK : Yes.

WENNA : Is the patient young or old ?

WELBECK : A little of both.

WENNA : (*Timidly*) Is the patient a woman ?

WELBECK : No !

WENNA : Oh ! I suppose I oughtn't to ask questions.

WELBECK : It's a man right enough, and a troublesome one at that.

WENNA : Won't he do what you tell him ?

WELBECK : He wants to, but he hasn't got the nerve.

WENNA : Poor thing ! Is it shell shock ?

WELBECK : No.

WENNA : Can't you hypnotise him ?

WELBECK : I try to, but he won't be hypnotised.

WENNA : Then he's got a stronger will than you.

WELBECK : I don't know who's who. We get mixed up.

WENNA : Oh, he's pulling my leg, Monarch.

WELBECK : I'm not indeed.

WENNA: How can you get mixed up with your patient?

WELBECK: You don't understand.

WENNA: (*Shaking her head*) No, I don't. He's a man both young and old, who is ill and who hasn't got the nerve to do what you tell him.

WELBECK: Something like that.

WENNA: Then I give it up.

WELBECK: Then I shall have to give myself up.

WENNA: Why?

WELBECK: I'm the patient.

WENNA: You? Why didn't you say so?

WELBECK: I've been trying to say it. Listen, I once heard a woman's voice at the Opera, and walked about for days intoxicated.

WENNA: (*Intently*) What happened then?

WELBECK: Nothing.

WENNA: How unromantic!

WELBECK: I was stirred, taken out of myself.

WENNA: And you did nothing.

WELBECK: I used to label love hysteria.

WENNA: And don't you now?

WELBECK: No. (*Pause*) Not now.

WENNA: Why do you tell me this?

WELBECK : You know.

WENNA : Do I ?

WELBECK : Wenna, I've asked myself a thousand times if—you loved me. I've hoped sometimes, sometimes I've despaired. When you were brightest I've said it's friendship, and that love would embarrass you. When you've been quiet I thought you bored. And so I've argued and tortured myself until I can stand it no longer.

WENNA : I suppose all clever people are like you.

WELBECK : What d'you mean ?

WENNA : No intuition.

WELBECK : Oh, don't torture me, I've tortured myself enough.

WENNA : Torture you ? Don't you *know* ? (*Holds out hands.*)

WELBECK : (*Clasping her*) Wenna—sweet !

WENNA : You knew all the time, Guy ?

WELBECK : It's the first time you've called me Guy.
Do say it again.

WENNA : (*Laughs*) Guy. (*He kisses her.*)

WELBECK : Wenna, I hope you feel one quarter as happy as I do.

WENNA : (*Spreading her arms*) All that. It can't be measured.

WELBECK : (*Clasping her*) I must kiss you again.

WENNA : Do you know when I first saw you ?

WELBECK : That afternoon your father brought me back from the station, and you were in your riding-habit.

(WENNA *laughingly shakes her head.*)

Well, when was it ?

WENNA : In my first fairy story, and I dreamt of you when I went to bed. You've been coming for years—all my life, and now you've come.

WELBECK : Then you're really in love with some ideal hero, while I'm the most ordinary of mortals.

WENNA : No, I'm in love with you—real you. All my heroes were only your heralds.

WELBECK : It's the opposite with me.

WENNA : How unkind !

WELBECK : I mean, darling, all the ugly realities of life were the dark background to the beauty of Wenna.

WENNA : I suppose we shan't both wake up in a moment.

WELBECK : What an awful thought ! We had better apply a test.

WENNA : I know. You pinch me.

WELBECK : We'll kiss instead.

WENNA : Will it be quite——

WELBECK : As efficacious ?

(WENNA *nods.*)

It'll be much nicer.

(ENTER MRS. VERYVERY, *rather breathless.*)

MRS. VERYVERY : Wenna, Wottle's *was* shut—I can't get the wool.

(MRS. VERYVERY *stands staring.*)

WELBECK : (*Taking WENNA'S hand*) May I offer you a son-in-law instead ?

(WENNA *gives little laugh.*)

MRS. VERYVERY : Oh, Wenna. (WENNA *crosses to her*) I'm *so* glad, Dr. Welbeck ! I knew something lucky was going to happen when I met poor Grainger's funeral in the village.

WENNA : Oh, Mother !

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE—*Same as Act I*

(*A few days later. DISCOVERED REV. ROBERT VERYVERY sleeping on sofa with an eiderdown quilt over him. His breath is laboured. MRS. VERYVERY is watching him anxiously. ENTER WENNA on tiptoe. MRS. VERYVERY raises her hand.*)

MRS. VERYVERY : (*With suppressed excitement*) He's been having quite a good sleep.

WENNA : (*Bending over him*) Dear Papa !

MRS. VERYVERY : What's the time ? (*Looks at watch*) Guy ought to be here soon. I knew when your father boasted of his health something would happen.

WENNA : Oh, Guy will get him well, he's so wonderful. Old Vagus has kept talking about clergyman's sore throat, and now Papa can scarcely breathe.

MRS. VERYVERY : Of course, Dr. Vagus isn't a specialist.

WENNA : I wish Guy would come. He makes you feel better somehow directly he enters the room.

MRS. VERYVERY : He's young and has ideas, while Dr. Vagus has experience.

WENNA : (*With a little laugh*) I've had quite enough experience of him.

MRS. VERYVERY : How can you laugh when we've been visited with this affliction ?

WENNA : It relieves me inside. I feel I could scream when I listen to Papa breathing.

MRS. VERYVERY : He ought to be in bed, I'm sure.

(*VERYVERY moves and opens eyes.*)

WENNA : Look ! (*Leans over sofa and kisses him*)
Did I wake you, dear Papa ?

VERYVERY : (*Takes her hand and looks up*) Little Pony. (*He gulps as if mouth were dry and looks about.*)

MRS. VERYVERY : You've had a beautiful sleep, Robert.

VERYVERY : I may have dropped off for a moment.

MRS. VERYVERY : (*Offering cup*) Here's some nice chicken broth.

VERYVERY : No, no thanks. It's greasy.

MRS. VERYVERY : Oh, but you must take nourishment. You've had nothing for nearly two hours. You know what the doctor said.

VERYVERY : I should be all right if it weren't for my throat.

WENNA : (*Offers glass*) Papa darling, try some of this.

VERYVERY : What is it ?

WENNA : Only lemon water.

(*He takes a few sips with an effort.*)

MRS. VERYVERY : Have an egg beaten up in milk ?

VERYVERY : I'd like some tea.

MRS. VERYVERY : There's no nourishment in tea.
Now a little Brand's Essence——

WENNA : I'll get it.

(EXIT WENNA.)

MRS. VERYVERY : Shall I sponge your face and hands ?

VERYVERY : No, dear, no.

MRS. VERYVERY : That's what you say to everything.

VERYVERY : (*Reading*) I'm all right. Give me the
"Telegraph." (MRS. VERYVERY *hands it.*)

MRS. VERYVERY : Oh, no, Robert, you're very poorly.
Don't you remember saying you'd never had a
day's illness in your life ? I'm not a bit super-
stitious, but whenever I say Amelia hasn't broken
anything lately, she comes to me next morning
with a confession.

VERYVERY : (*Crackling newspaper*) The rain-fall on
earth mounds. (*Suddenly*) Why, bless my soul !

MRS. VERYVERY : What is the matter ?

VERYVERY : Extraordinary I missed it.

MRS. VERYVERY : Missed what ?

VERYVERY : That's *very* interesting. There's three-quarters of a column notice of my book in the "Daily Telegraph." (*Reads*) "The Healing Serpent in the Wilderness, versus the Serpent Bite of Inoculation, by the Rev. Robert Veryvery. This is in some ways a remarkable book. (*Glances up*) And contains passages of great vigour." (*Looks up*) That's the "Daily Telegraph," an important paper. (*Reads*) "The muscular English shows the writer an enthusiast of his subject ;" then we come to appalling—twaddle. (*Looks up*) Did you hear that ?

MRS. VERYVERY : What *can* they mean ?

VERYVERY : (*Glancing at paper*) Oh, my objection to inoculation on hygienic grounds, of course. Can't understand one objecting to be poisoned by dogs and cats.

MRS. VERYVERY : My dear !

VERYVERY : Monkeying with messes.

MRS. VERYVERY : I wouldn't let it worry you.

VERYVERY : I shan't. I shall just skim it through perfunctorily and leave it : leave it.

MRS. VERYVERY : After all, "The Argus" said it had undoubted merit.

VERYVERY : (*Compressing paper*) What an awkward paper "The Telegraph" is to hold ! We shall see what the really serious Quarterlies have to say.

(ENTER WENNA *in hat and coat.*)

WENNA: The kettle was boiling for a wonder, and I've brought some Calves' Foot Jelly. Roots don't stock Brand's Essence.

(*Puts tray on table.*)

MRS. VERYVERY: Roots never *have* got what you want.

(MRS. VERYVERY *takes tray and WENNA goes to sofa.*)

WENNA: Oh, you do look so uncomfy. Try this. (*Props him up with another cushion.*) Isn't that better?

VERYVERY: (*Patting her hand*) Bless you, Pony child!

WENNA: (*Kissing VERYVERY'S forehead*) How hot your head is. I'll sponge it with Eau de Cologne.

MRS. VERYVERY: Let your father have his tea and jelly first.

VERYVERY: I don't want the jelly.

MRS. VERYVERY: You must have it, Robert. Just a spoonful. (*Gives it.*)

VERYVERY: I've had a slating in "The Daily Telegraph," Pony.

WENNA: (*Kneeling by sofa*) What! your new book?

MRS. VERYVERY: I tell your father not to worry over it.

VERYVERY : I don't. The man's a theological ass, that's all.

WENNA : (*Glancing down at paper*) Oh, what rot !

VERYVERY : It's vulgar.

WENNA : What a hateful man !

VERYVERY : As a dry matter of fact, it's abuse, not criticism.

WENNA : I wish he'd tumble off a horse.

VERYVERY : (*MRS. VERYVERY gives jelly plate.*) At the same time one must remember that classic of Patience, Job. Those things are sent to chasten us.

WENNA : (*Kissing top of head*) Dear old thing ! I believe you're growing religious now you're ill.

(ENTER AMELIA.)

AMELIA : Dr. Welbeck and Dr. Vagus.

VERYVERY : (*To MRS. VERYVERY*) You haven't sent for Guy ?

MRS. VERYVERY : Certainly I have. Show them in, Amelia.

(EXIT AMELIA, *leaving door ajar.*)

(*To WENNA*) He must have called on Dr. Vagus coming from the station, Wenna. Put things a little straight.

VERYVERY : Absurd ! Calling a man down from London for a sore throat.

WENNA : *You're the patient now.*

VERYVERY : (*Mutters*) Absurd ! (*He continues muttering and crackling his paper while they busy themselves. Knock. AMELIA pushes open door.*)

(ENTER VAGUS AND WELBECK.)

VAGUS : (*Shaking hands with MRS. VERYVERY*). Good-day.

WELBECK : I wired Vagus and he ran me up in his car.

VERYVERY : (*Mutters*) Professional etiquette.

WELBECK : (*Nods and smiles at VERYVERY while he greets MRS. VERYVERY*) That's right.

WENNA : (*As WELBECK takes her hands and kisses her*) I've lots to say to you. Mind you call me the minute you're done with Papa.

(*WELBECK and WENNA keep their eyes on each other while she lightly and swiftly moves to the door. She nods towards VAGUS, who has his back turned and makes a dainty grimace. Then blows WELBECK a kiss and vanishes.*)

VAGUS : (*Shaking hands with VERYVERY*) And what sort of night did the patient have ?

MRS. VERYVERY : Very broken, Doctor. Moaning in his sleep and asking for water when he woke.

VERYVERY : That's nothing.

WELBECK : (*Shaking hands*) Nothing to you, is it ?

VERYVERY: Nothing to bring you down from London for.

WELBECK: (*Who speaks in a quiet measured way with a little reassuring smile*) You musn't think my visit professional. I'm glad to find an excuse to see Wenna.

MRS. VERYVERY: He won't take his nourishment.

VAGUS: Ah! It's always these robust ones that make the worst patients. They haven't learnt the art of being ill.

WELBECK: (*To VERYVERY*) Throat a bit troublesome?

VERYVERY: I should be all right if it wasn't for my throat.

WELBECK: Let me have a look.

(*VERYVERY opens mouth, WELBECK looks.*)

As wide as possible. 'Um! thanks. (*To VAGUS*)
Not very pretty.

VERYVERY: (*Working finger round collar*) I have great difficulty in swallowing. (*To VAGUS*) My wife says take this, take that——

(*VAGUS turns round, gives little shake of head and says something to MRS. VERYVERY.*)

WELBECK: (*Shaking thermometer and placing it in his mouth*) You needn't swallow this, at any rate.

VAGUS: (*Takes up paper*) Let's see what the "Telegraph's" got to tell us.

(WELBECK feels pulse. VERYVERY frowns and half ejaculates at MRS. VERYVERY to get paper away from VAGUS.)

WELBECK : Keep your mouth closed, please.

MRS. VERYVERY : (To VAGUS) He talks in his sleep.
A most unusual thing for him.

VAGUS : (Putting his paper down, which MRS. VERYVERY takes up) If his rest has been broken I'd better send up Nurse Croft.

MRS. VERYVERY : (In whisper) He hates nurses.

VAGUS : (Shrugging shoulders) What are you to do ?

VERYVERY : (To WELBECK) Well ? What is it ?
105 in the shade ?

WELBECK : (Handing thermometer to VAGUS) Quite high enough. You must get off to bed.

VERYVERY : Cabined, cribbed, confined for clergyman's sore throat.

WELBECK : You'll be more comfortable in bed.

VERYVERY : I like to look round and see my books.

WELBECK : I'll bring some upstairs for you to look at.
You'll probably doze.

VAGUS : Yes, you do too much reading. If you're dull, try a light game. What about spillikins ? (To MRS. VERYVERY) I used to be a great hand at spillikins once upon a time. They said I cheated. I expect I was too good for some of them.

WELBECK: (*To VERYVERY*) While I'm having a few minutes' chat with Dr. Vagus you get off to bed. You'll be more comfortable.

(*WELBECK and VAGUS walk together to door.*)

MRS. VERYVERY: (*Going*) I'll see about his room.
(*To both Doctors*) Oh, what about nourishment?

VERYVERY: I can't swallow.

WELBECK: (*Smiling and opening door for VAGUS*)
You'll do as you're told.

VERYVERY: (*Raising voice*) Mind, no knives or needles. I won't be primed up with any of your fantastic poisons. Eno's Fruit Salt if you like.

WELBECK: (*To MRS. VERYVERY*) That's the worst of being a prospective son-in-law—no authority.

(*EXEUNT WELBECK and VAGUS.*)

VERYVERY: (*Catching up paper*) Then we come to appalling twaddle!

(*ENTER WENNA.*)

WENNA: Well, Papa? What did Guy say? (*Kneels by sofa.*)

VERYVERY: Guy, Guy, Guy, he's all you believe in.

WENNA: Don't talk like that, Papa. Now is there anything you'd like?

VERYVERY: I'd like to see you in the saddle, Pony.

WENNA : (*With her hands in his*) We'll go for a gallop together—to-morrow or perhaps Thursday. You'll be good and I'll be good.

VERYVERY : (*Patting her head and looking at paper*) I've a lot to be thankful for ; this sunshine pouring in, kind people about me. (*Murmurs "Twaddle."*) This airy room.

WENNA : (*Taking paper*) Shall I burn this ?

VERYVERY : No, I may read it in the night for amusement.

WENNA : (*Sitting on table*) There've been heaps of callers enquiring after you. They think you must be very bad to stay in for five days and have the doctor.

VERYVERY : What nonsense.

WENNA : Mamma's putting up a bulletin.

VERYVERY : A bulletin ? For me ?

WENNA : To save Amelia's legs. She's got the silver to do.

(ENTER MRS. VERYVERY *with an air of suppressed importance.*)

MRS. VERYVERY : Robert, you must come up at once. (*She places a shawl round him.*)

VERYVERY : Come up ? What d'you mean ? What are you doing ?

MRS. VERYVERY : (*With unusual authority*) You must come up to bed at once, Robe

WENNA : Yes, come along, Papa.

VERYVERY : (*Half pushed, half led to door*) A little later.

MRS. VERYVERY : No, at once.

VERYVERY : (*Making a stand*) Esther, this is unseemly. It's not comely conduct before the child. (*She takes his arm.*)

(ENTER WELBECK.)

MRS. VERYVERY : Don't be absurd, Robert.

WELBECK : That's right, bed's the best place.

VERYVERY : I won't be pushed.

MRS. VERYVERY : (*Shoving him on the word "push"*) No one wants to push you.

WENNA : Come along, Papa. Be good.

(EXEUNT MR. and MRS. VERYVERY and WENNA.
A scuffle is heard.)

(RE-ENTER VERYVERY *with* MRS. VERYVERY *holding on to his shawl, and* WENNA.)

VERYVERY : I *will* have my books.

MRS. VERYVERY : (*Catching up book*) Here you are, Robert—Dean Stanley.

VERYVERY : Stanley? No. Where's the "Sporting and Dramatic"?

WENNA : (*Catching it up from table*) Here it is, Papa.

(EXEUNT VERYVERY and WENNA, MRS. VERY-
VERY *about to follow.*)

WELBECK: (*Taking step forward*) One moment,
Mrs. Veryvery.

(WELBECK *closes door.*)

I don't wish to alarm you, but I shouldn't be doing
my duty if I didn't warn you that Mr. Veryvery's
condition calls for some anxiety.

MRS. VERYVERY: Do you mean he is dangerously ill?

WELBECK: I mean that his condition is distinctly
grave. He must have a nurse.

MRS. VERYVERY: He hates nurses so.

WELBECK: You'll need help.

MRS. VERYVERY: Of course, if it's necessary. (*Sotto
voce*) There will be her meals to think about.
They're such a worry in the house, and expect
to be treated like other people.

WELBECK: I had better tell you——

MRS. VERYVERY: Yes.

WELBECK: That throat means diphtheria.

MRS. VERYVERY: Diphtheria!

WELBECK: You musn't allow yourself to be alarmed.
We can treat these cases now very successfully.
The difficulty is, of course, in Mr. Veryvery's
case, that he may raise an objection—probably
will.

MRS. VERYVERY : You mean——

WELBECK : His prejudice against inoculation.

MRS. VERYVERY : You must persuade him.

WELBECK : I'm afraid he won't listen to me.

MRS. VERYVERY : Whom will he listen to then ?

WELBECK : I think Wenna might persuade him.

MRS. VERYVERY : Oh, she must.

WELBECK : You have a talk with her.

MRS. VERYVERY : No, no. You had better tell her how serious it is. If she knows that, she can't refuse—especially you.

WELBECK : I hope not.

MRS. VERYVERY : She has unbounded faith in you—and she's so fond of her father.

WELBECK : I'll try.

(ENTER DR. VAGUS.)

DR. VAGUS : (*Rubbing his hands*) Well, we've got him upstairs. He'll soon be between the sheets.

WELBECK : That's good. I've been telling Mrs. Veryvery the symptoms are clearly those of diphtheria.

VAGUS : (*Quickly*) What ? Yes, clearly. (*To Mrs. VERYVERY*) I was afraid it was a case of diphtheria all along. But we don't like to be alarmists.

MRS. VERYVERY : (*Looking from DR. VAGUS to DR. WELBECK*) Won't he get over it if he doesn't consent to be—er—inoculated?

(DOCTORS *look at one another.*)

WELBECK : Mrs. Veryvery, in my opinion—and I think Dr. Vagus will agree with me—we must regard it as essential to his recovery.

MRS. VERYVERY : I understand.

WELBECK : I've just told Mrs. Veryvery that we must get his consent to an anti-toxin.

MRS. VERYVERY : I *wish* he wasn't so obstinate.

WELBECK : Keep a good heart. Remember, he ought to have plenty of reserve force—eh, Vagus?

VAGUS : He's got the best constitution of twenty miles round—could box—do anything.

WELBECK : Temperate habits and an out-door life count at these times.

VAGUS : They do indeed.

MRS. VERYVERY : (*To WELBECK*) I think you had better have a talk with Wenna at once—if you don't mind.

WELBECK : Certainly I will, if you wish it.

MRS. VERYVERY : I will send her to you.

(EXIT MRS. VERYVERY.)

WELBECK : (*To VAGUS*) I had to rub it in.

VAGUS : You did quite right.

WELBECK : One doesn't like to put the wind up, but—
well, you see yourself what the old man's like.

VAGUS : I always knew if he did crock up he'd
be the worst possible patient ; stubborn and pop
off like a balloon.

WELBECK : We must get that temperature down.

VAGUS : Quite so.

WELBECK : Is there a decent nurse in the village ?

VAGUS : Oh, Croft knows her job.

(ENTER WENNA *anxiously*. VAGUS *moves
towards door*.)

You're returning to Town ?

WELBECK : I must unfortunately for a day or so.

VAGUS : Well, there's nothing more to be done ex-
cept——

(VAGUS and WELBECK *nod at each other*. VAGUS
shakes hands with WENNA at door. To WENNA)

Keep your mother's spirits up. Good-bye.

(EXIT VAGUS. WENNA *runs into WELBECK'S
arms with a little cry of joy*. WELBECK *kisses her
absently*.)

WENNA : (*Quickly*) Well ? Well ? You look as
grave as an owl, Guy.

WELBECK : Do I ?

WENNA : (*A little breathlessly*) Is Papa dangerously ill ?

WELBECK : I never said dangerously.

WENNA : No, but is he ?

WELBECK : (*Hesitating and moving magazine on table*)
The next few days will be rather an anxious time ;
just a little anxious.

WENNA : (*Quickly, taking the lapels of his coat*)
What is the matter ? Tell me, Guy, what is the
matter ?

WELBECK : The diagnosis——

WENNA : Oh, not such long words. What is it ?

WELBECK : Unmistakably——diphtheria.

WENNA : (*Turning away*) Oh ! How dreadful !
Will he have to have a horrid tube in his poor
throat ?

WELBECK : That depends. We are hoping it will not
be necessary to perform tracheotomy.

WENNA : (*Wheeling round*) Guy, you won't let
him—— (*Sinks her head on his shoulder. Then
looks up*) You haven't sent for me to tell me——

WELBECK : (*Speaking slowly*) Wenna, I want you
to help me to cure him.

WENNA : I ? To help you ?

WELBECK : Yes.

WENNA : I'll do anything, anything. Oh, I know, you want some of my blood. (*Rolls up sleeve*) Take it, please, all you want. I can spare lots and lots.

WELBECK : (*Looks a moment with quiet smile of tender amusement*) Dear little girl ! (*He raises arm and kisses it*) No, I haven't come as a vampire.

WENNA : (*Looking up wistfully*). Then how can I help, Guy dear ? Tell me.

WELBECK : (*Hesitates*) A subcutaneous injection——
(WENNA *puts her hand up to forehead*—WELBECK *smiles.*)

I mean he can have a serum injected under the skin that kills the germs of diphtheria. One microbe against another.

WENNA : How delightfully simple, but how can I help ? Have I got to inject it ?

WELBECK : (*Taking hand smilingly*) No, Wenna. Not even that. (*Pauses and looks into her eyes*) But your father's a set aversion to knives and needles, as he calls it, and this is the needle treatment. He'll listen to you before anyone. I know that. Your mother thinks you can persuade him.

WENNA : Tell me, what is a serum ?

WELBECK : (*Dropping hand and speaking slightly airily*) Quite a simple affair. In this case we take a little of the enemy—the toxin or poison—diphtheria and inject it into a horse hypodermically——

WENNA : Hypo ?

WELBECK : I forgot—under the skin. Then after a time, when an antitoxin or antidote to the poison is developed in the blood, we draw it off and inject a small quantity into the patient.

WENNA : (*Subdued, but trying to be cheerful*) I see. You put some poison into a horse, then take it out, and put it into a person.

WELBECK : Stated baldly, yes ; only it assumes a new character.

WENNA : It doesn't sound very pretty. I don't think I should like it myself, Guy.

WELBECK : Thank heavens, it isn't necessary for you.

WENNA : And I don't think I should like anyone to put poison into Morning Glory or Black Magic.

WELBECK : Of course you wouldn't. And I hope no one ever will.

WENNA : But any horse.

WELBECK : (*With impatient motion of hand*) Some wretched old nag, only fit for the knackers.

WENNA : (*Pausing and playing with handkerchief*)
Guy, dear.

WELBECK : Yes ?

WENNA : Won't anything else do for Papa ?

WELBECK : (*Pauses and looks hard at her*) Wenna !

WENNA : Yes, Guy ?

WELBECK : I want you to promise me to persuade your father.

WENNA : But he hates it, and so do I.

WELBECK : It must not turn on one's likes or dislikes.

WENNA : (*Earnestly, under her breath*) Aren't the doctors who do it called vivisectors ?

WELBECK : That isn't vivisection. (*Stopping in walk and turning round.*)

WENNA : I see.

WELBECK : (*With quiet, patronising inflection*) Even if it were, vivisector doesn't sound such a nice name as poet ; but vivisectors have discovered solid facts that alleviate human suffering. That's even more than poetry can do.

WENNA : I expect it's all very wonderful, only——

WELBECK : (*With superior smile*) Only——

WENNA : Don't vivisectors cut up animals alive ?

WELBECK : (*With a sigh*) Mischievous cranks with money enough to work on the emotions of sentimental old ladies may tell you so. If an animal has to be cut, it is put to sleep first. It feels nothing.

WENNA : But suppose a cruel surgeon didn't trouble to—to put it to sleep ?

WELBECK : Then he would be breaking the law of the land. Do you know that there are inspectors appointed to see that the law is carried out ?

WENNA : No.

WELBECK : Besides, most experiments are pin-prick inoculations.

WENNA : Something inside me says it's wrong.

WELBECK : (*Takes her hand*) But won't something inside you listen to reason ?

WENNA : (*Bursting forth*) It's cruel and wicked.

WELBECK : You have a sensitive nature, Wenna, a sympathetic mind, that's why I love you. But life isn't beautiful or kind below the surface. It inflicts suffering on wild creatures and civilized people, and we doctors see the ugly hidden reality. We have to ask which is the lesser of two evils. You follow me ?

WENNA : Oh, I can't argue with you, Guy.

WELBECK : You wouldn't put the life of a guinea pig before the life of your father ?

WENNA : No.

WELBECK : That's right, Wenna, dear. And you'll help me ?

WENNA : (*Agitated*) I can't, Guy. Don't ask me. Oh, please don't.

WELBECK : It will multiply his chance of recovery.

WENNA: Papa musn't die. You will save him some other way. Surely there are other ways just as good.

WELBECK: Not as good, Wenna. This is the modern treatment. You want us to avail ourselves of the latest scientific discovery?

WENNA: Of course—I mean—Oh, Guy, I love you so. Don't ask me.

WELBECK: And I love you, Wenna, and know how fond you are of your father. That's just why I am asking you. Will you promise me? (*Holds out hands.*)

WENNA: (*Placing her hands in his and looking up earnestly*) Guy (*Pause*). (*In distressed whisper*) I can't.

(ENTER MRS. VERYVERY.)

MRS. VERYVERY: He has dozed off. I hope Wenna understands. (*Pause. Lovers stand apart.—WENNA looks away*) Wenna, you are going to persuade your father?

WELBECK: I'm afraid it's no use my staying any longer.

MRS. VERYVERY: (*Raising her voice*) Wenna, you haven't refused!

WENNA: I can't do it, Mamma. I would like to.

MRS. VERYVERY: But, my dear child, don't you think Guy knows what he's talking about.

WELBECK : Don't press her now, Mrs. Veryvery.

MRS. VERYVERY : Oh, but this is nonsense.

WENNA : (*Angrily*) It isn't nonsense, Mamma—it's wicked and cruel.

WELBECK : Give her time to think over it. (*To WENNA*) You think over it, Wenna, dear. (*Puts out hand and moves toward door.*)

MRS. VERYVERY : You musn't go like this, Guy. (*To WENNA*) Do you know what this means? Has Guy told you?

WENNA : Yes, he said it was the latest treatment and all that.

MRS. VERYVERY : It's *more* than that, Wenna. Your father's dangerously ill. He may die without it. Think of that—his life's in your hands. The life of the dear one we love in your hands. Oh, Wenna, how can you be so wicked and obstinate. (*Caressing her*) Wenna, dear—say yes. Promise us you will. Think of your father upstairs hardly able to breathe.

WELBECK : (*Coming forward and fondling WENNA's hand*) Wenna, dear, I'm so sorry. Please help us. It's desperately hard for me to ask you. Will you?

WENNA : (*Looking up with hysterical sob*) Perhaps. Give me time. I must think it over.

WELBECK : (*To MRS. VERYVERY*) We'll leave her now. I'll run upstairs with you before I go.

(To WENNA) Thank you, dearest. Think it over.

(EXEUNT MRS. VERYVERY and WELBECK.)

(ENTER LARKSPUR at window.)

LARKSPUR: (Softly) Oh, there you are. (More loudly) Wenna. (WENNA doesn't move) I've come to inquire. (Pause. Anxiously) Why, Wenna, you've been crying. What is the matter? Is your father worse?

(WENNA looks up woe-begone.)

My poor little Wenna.

WENNA: Oh, Hilary. I'm in despair.

LARKSPUR: Surely, my dear little lady, things aren't so black. You musn't take it like that. Your father's going to get better.

WENNA: You don't understand.

LARKSPUR: You take it too much to heart.

WENNA: (In awestruck whisper) If Papa dies they'll blame me.

LARKSPUR: Blame you?

WENNA: Yes, I shall feel like a murderer.

LARKSPUR: Wenna, what *are* you talking about?

WENNA: If you can save a person's life and you don't, isn't that murder?

LARKSPUR: No. It all depends. What do you mean?
(Sits on couch.)

WENNA : (*Laying hands on his arm*) Hilary, I must confide in some one. You're my friend, aren't you ?

LARKSPUR : Of course I am.

WENNA : It's like this. (*Pause.*)

LARKSPUR : Yes.

WENNA : Papa's got diphtheria. (*Slight pause*) They—Mamma and Guy—know Papa's hatred of inoculations and they want——

LARKSPUR : (*Drawing a quick breath*) Ah ! That's it, is it ?

WENNA : (*Nods*) Yes. They want me to persuade him. They think I can.

LARKSPUR : Oh, Wenna. I understand your white little woebegone face now. (*Under breath*) It's a scoundrel's business.

WENNA : (*Pleadingly*) Of course, Guy means well.

LARKSPUR : Oh, please, Wenna. I know you love him, so don't tempt me to speak out.

WENNA : I resisted Guy. Then Mamma came in and reproached me. And then they both pleaded. Oh, I couldn't bear it any longer.

(LARKSPUR *makes an angry exclamation.*)

(*Pathetically ; looking up*) You see, I couldn't argue, though I knew they were wrong.

LARKSPUR: Of course you knew. And they made you promise, I suppose.

WENNA: I hardly know. I said I'd think it over or something. I don't quite know what I said.

LARKSPUR: Poor child!

WENNA: I wish you'd been there, you could have answered their argument.

LARKSPUR: Argument! I know it backward. And it's lies, all of it, from beginning to end. They say experiments on animals have led to discoveries in digestion. Is a dog's digestion like ours when it can digest bone? Who cares? Poison it slowly.

WENNA: How I wish——

LARKSPUR: Could Broco have discovered the centre of speech in a dog? Never mind, carve it about, it can't tell tales. Hughling Jackson mapped out the centres of the brain without a single experiment. (*Pacing up and down*) Did vivisection discover the circulation of the blood? Of course, when Harvey says the arrangement of the veins in a dead person suggested it. Is secretion normal when an animal is opened out?

WENNA: Oh don't, Hilary!

LARKSPUR: Why, the famous Sir Henry Denton *admitted* that certain experiments had done little but unfit him to deal with human organs. Perhaps Dr. Welbeck said——

WENNA : Don't, don't, don't. My head's throbbing.

LARKSPUR : Forgive me, Wenna. I lose myself on this subject.

WENNA : Guy said that most experiments are pin-pricks.

LARKSPUR : And did he tell you of the agony after the pin-prick injection of tetanus ?

WENNA : But I'm thinking of Papa. Tell me, is diphtheria inoculation very cruel ?

LARKSPUR : No, only moderately cruel. The toxin of diphtheria is repeatedly injected into a horse. It goes off its feed, has shivering fits, and if it does not die during the treatment its organs often become so brittle that they break afterwards and it dies from haemorrhage. Only that.

WENNA : I can't believe any man could be so wicked.

LARKSPUR : That's nothing. Men—*and* women—do far worse than that. I hate myself for telling you.

WENNA : (*Pacing to and fro*) No, no, I must hear everything. What's a woman's heart worth that ignores such terrible things after once she hears them.

LARKSPUR : It's easy enough to forget what we hear, but if you had ever seen——

WENNA : Seen ?

LARKSPUR : A vivisector's laboratory. The place where they do their experiments.

WENNA: I simply can't believe: can't take it in.
(*Stops suddenly and speaks with slow vehemence*)
Hilary, I will see. (*Pause*) With my own eyes.
I *must* know. Don't you realise Papa's life may
depend on—— Tell me, where can I see just what
happens.

LARKSPUR: What!

WENNA: Hilary, I'm in deadly earnest. I *must* know
for myself.

LARKSPUR: You can't.

WENNA: I will.

LARKSPUR: How?

WENNA: I don't know. Help me!

LARKSPUR: Help you? What can I do? One can't
rush into a doctor's laboratory.

WENNA: A doctor's laboratory! (*Suddenly*) Hilary!
Do you think Guy's Research work is vivisection?
(*Takes his arm*) No—no, you don't think that.

(LARKSPUR *nods in affirmation.* WENNA *hurries
to table.*)

LARKSPUR: What are you going to do?

WENNA: I'll go straight up to London now.

LARKSPUR: (*With little laugh*) He'd never allow you
in his laboratory.

WENNA: (*Holding face in hands*) Wouldn't he?

(LARKSPUR *shakes head with smile.*)

He would. He has advised this—this inoculation you call it. It's I who have to persuade Papa—Guy can't refuse to show me—everything (*Turns over pages of Time-Table quickly.*)

LARKSPUR: What are you doing?

WENNA: I'm looking out the next train to London.

LARKSPUR: But, my dear Wenna—

WENNA: Twelve-fifteen—no, that's not it.

LARKSPUR: But you can't—

WENNA: Yes, it is. Twelve-fifteen.

LARKSPUR: You aren't going alone?

WENNA: I am.

LARKSPUR: No, I'm going with you.

WENNA: (*Looking up*) Really and truly?

LARKSPUR: Really and truly.

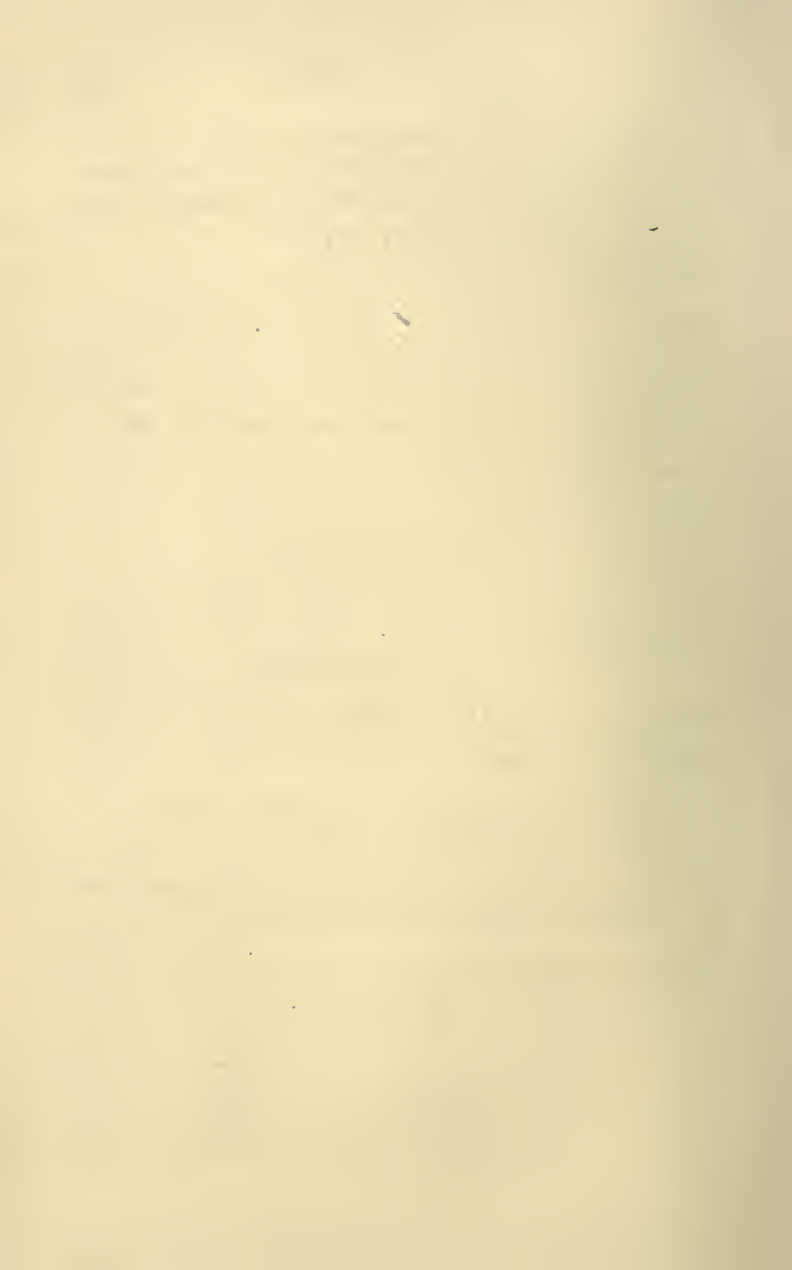
WENNA: We must go at once. There's a train we can just catch. Ready?

HILARY: (*Taking her hand while she half drags him forward*) I'm with you—all the way.

WENNA: Come, Hilary.

(EXEUNT.)

CURTAIN



ACT III

SCENE I.—*Morning of next day.*

(DR. WELBECK'S *Laboratory. Table in centre. Placed about are cages, tubes, instruments, and appliances of various kinds. Inside one cage is a dog lying against bars. Inside another is a live rabbit, and in two others are guinea pigs. A key turns in the door.*)

ENTER ASSISTANT.

ASSISTANT : (*Walking to centre and turning round*)
Come in, sir.

(ENTER LARKSPUR and WENNA. *Latter looks round slowly and fearfully with one hand up to cheek. LARKSPUR is dressed in tweed suit, and carries thick stick.*)

WENNA : (*In whisper*) Oh, Hilary !

ASSISTANT : You are friends of the doctor, sir ?

LARKSPUR : This lady is his future wife.

ASSISTANT : I beg your pardon. (*With little bow to WENNA*) You understand, miss——

LARKSPUR : Yes, we understand. You just leave us here.

ASSISTANT : It's as much as my place is worth. I thought you and the lady only wanted to see inside.

WENNA : No, no, we must be left alone.

ASSISTANT : Sorry, miss, it can't be done.

LARKSPUR : (*Stuffing a bunch of notes into his hand*)
Look here, do we understand one another? Make your own explanations to the doctor. Here's my address. (*Gives card*) If things don't turn out right, let me know and I'll see you through.

ASSISTANT : (*Counting notes*) It means being sacked.

LARKSPUR : (*Looking at him hard*) It means a business transaction.

ASSISTANT : I shall understand the lady had a special appointment with the doctor here, both of you, d'you see?

LARKSPUR : Understand what you like.

ASSISTANT : (*Going, pocketing notes*) All right, sir. I don't suppose you'll have long to wait. The doctor's usually here about now. I shall be down below.

WENNA : (*Tremulously*) Oh, thanks so much.

(EXIT ASSISTANT.)

WENNA *hides face in hands.*)

Hilary, look! Look at those cages! (*Turns away.*)

LARKSPUR : Don't look. What's the good? You'd better go, Wenna, while there's time.

WENNA : (*Catching his sleeve and speaking under her breath*) Horrible!

LARKSPUR : (*Taking her arm*) Come!

WENNA: (*Stopping short*) I won't. I'll see it through whatever happens.

(*Footsteps outside.*)

Listen! (*She glances round hurriedly, footsteps die away.*)

LARKSPUR: That's not Welbeck.

WENNA: (*Looking round*) Oh, what has he done to that dog do you think? It's so dreadfully still.

LARKSPUR: I shouldn't look.

WENNA: I suppose inspectors do come in sometimes.

LARKSPUR: Less than one per cent. of the experiments are witnessed.

WENNA: Hilary, I'm going to stand back here, away from those awful cages.

LARKSPUR: Why?

WENNA: He shan't see me when he comes in.

LARKSPUR: What are you going to do?

WENNA: I don't know yet. I shall wait and watch.

LARKSPUR: There'll be a scene.

WENNA: I can't help it. Sh——!

LARKSPUR: (*Listening*) It's nothing.

WENNA: Yes it is. Listen! (*Sounds of steps*) He's coming.

(LARKSPUR takes WENNA into a curtained recess at side.)

ENTER WELBECK. *Hangs up hat. Puts on over-all, switches on light over table, goes to one of the cages.*)

WELBECK: *You look pretty mopy. (Glances at card on cage) What did we give you? Tetanus, eh? I'm surprised you've lasted so long. (Passes to other guinea pig's cage) And you, mister? Another segment of kidney cut out? (Passes on) Ah, you were the gentleman disposing of his kidneys. (Passes to rabbit and scrutinises it) Now then, Sambo, how are you to-day? (Gently prods it through bars) Um! Can't blame you for going to a better world. I'd quite an affection for you, Sammy, in a way. Your symptoms were so interesting.*

(EXIT through back wing, whistling.)

WENNA: *(Peering out and speaking in horrified whisper) I can't bear it much longer.*

WELBECK: *(Bringing dog's cage to table) Well, my little friend, you aren't hurt. Don't look up so woeful. (Takes out dog. Takes knife out of anti-septic and examines it.)*

WENNA: *(Starts forward two or three steps with a scream) Stop!*

(WELBECK drops knife and springs round, WENNA darts upon and clutches his arm.)

Don't do it. For Heaven's sake, Guy, don't do it.

WELBECK : (*With half-smothered exclamation of astonishment*) Wenna !

WENNA : (*Choking*) Oh, don't do it. I can't bear it any longer. You're going to cut it open ! (*Like a tiger.*) You're not a doctor, Guy ! You're not a doctor, you're a devil !

WELBECK : Wenna ! . . .

(*LARKSPUR comes forward.*)

WENNA : I never believed in devils. Now I do. Who but a devil would torture ?

WELBECK : (*Sharply*) How did you get in here ?
(*Looks round rapidly and sees LARKSPUR.*)

Ah !

WENNA : Let it go, Guy. Let it go, I say.

WELBECK : You're hysterical, Wenna.

WENNA : (*Clutching his arm*) Let it go !

LARKSPUR : Let that dog go.

WELBECK : (*Turning on LARKSPUR in suppressed rage*)
And what are you doing here ?

LARKSPUR : My name's Larkspur, and I'm here because I'm looking after Miss Veryvery.

WELBECK : *You* looking after Miss Veryvery !

LARKSPUR : Yes. I came up with Miss Veryvery yesterday afternoon.

WELBECK : Yesterday afternoon ?

LARKSPUR : Yes, we couldn't get in here ; she stayed at her Aunt's house, so that she could see for herself this morning what your research work means. I regret the necessity for bringing her.

WELBECK : You may have further cause for regret a little later. (*To WENNA*) That little beast would have had an anaesthetic and felt nothing.

WENNA : But the horror, the horror of helplessness !

WELBECK : Pshaw !

WENNA : It was beseeching you. I felt what it felt.

WELBECK : Really, Wenna, you are all imagination.

WENNA : Have you none ?

LARKSPUR : Does that rabbit suffer dying with half an organ ? Does that miserable little guinea pig suffer in the fiendish grip of tetanus ?

WELBECK : (*Icily*) Mr. Larkspur, I decline to discuss the matter with you. You know the way out. (*To WENNA, who is crouched up, sobbing*) Wenna, love, don't——

WENNA : (*Springing up*) Love ? Dare you speak that word ? (*She points round with sweep of hand*) Oh, Guy ! Guy ! It's *treason* against love.

LARKSPUR : (*To WENNA*) Come away.

WELBECK : (*To LARKSPUR*) You can go, but you leave Miss Veryvery with me.

WENNA : (*Drawing herself up*) When Mr. Larkspur goes, I go.

WELBECK: (*Shrugging his shoulders*) Oh, all right! Remember, any mischievous and unscrupulous person can appeal to the emotions, whether in science, politics, or religion.

WENNA: You have opened my eyes, no one else.

WELBECK: For the good of humanity the law allows experiments under anaesthetics. No rational person objects to that.

WENNA: (*Goes up to WELBECK and looks steadily in his face*) The quality of mercy is not strained. (*With a frantic gesture*) Oh, it's your clever brain that deceives you; your heart can never consent.

WELBECK: The hope of the world lies in science, not sentiment.

WENNA: (*Hotly*) Are we to climb to ease and comfort on the agony of animals? Don't you *see* it's wrong? The higher should sacrifice itself to the lower, the strong to the weak.

WELBECK: We can't begin discussing ethics.

WENNA: Why doesn't the Church stop it? Do we talk of Christ crucified and allow the animals to be crucified as well? I'm not religious, but we are like gods to the animals (*Pointing*), and how do we treat them? Pshaw! While this goes on humanity's no more than a clique. I don't pray, and if I did I couldn't if I said Amen to this—this hell. (*Shivers and hides her face.*)

WELBECK : Perhaps if your father dies you'll change your opinion, and when it's too late you'll never forgive yourself.

(WENNA gives a cry as if she had been struck.)

LARKSPUR : (*Going up to him threateningly*) You'd torture this girl as well as those helpless creatures ! You—coward !

WENNA : (*Laying hand on LARKSPUR'S arm*) Stop, stop, please.

WELBECK : (*Passionately, to WENNA*) I could have stood your coming here alone, but with this man—

LARKSPUR : Look here——

WENNA : (*To LARKSPUR*) Stop, Hilary.

(ENTER ASSISTANT. *Hands telegram to WELBECK.*)

WELBECK : (*Reading telegram and handing it to WENNA*) You see, your father's worse.

(WENNA reads telegram, lets it fall and stands staring.)

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE II.—*Same as ACT I., SCENE I.*

Time—Afternoon of same day.

(DISCOVERED MRS. VERYVERY *and* NURSE CROFT,
sitting at table.)

MRS. VERYVERY : But he's worse, much worse.

NURSE : His pulse was a little better.

MRS. VERYVERY : Tell me, Nurse, honestly, do you think he will recover ?

NURSE : We never give up hope.

MRS. VERYVERY : Oh, he's weaker. I can see it, Nurse ; he's dying.

NURSE : Come, Mrs. Veryvery, I've seen the most marvellous recoveries.

MRS. VERYVERY : Why didn't Dr. Vagus find out it was diphtheria before ? He never gives you a straight answer.

NURSE : There are so many kinds of sore throats, doctors have to be very careful before they pronounce a case diphtheria.

MRS. VERYVERY : What's a doctor for if he doesn't know ?

NURSE : Doctors won't say all they know.

MRS. VERYVERY : (*Grunts*) I know that. How was his temperature this morning ?

NURSE : It had dropped a little. That's usual.

MRS. VERYVERY : Is he taking all the nourishment the doctor ordered ?

NURSE : I manage to get most down.

MRS. VERYVERY : We must keep up his strength— I should have thought some good strong beef-tea——

NURSE : He's taken a nice quantity of milk to-day. We always consider cases of dip. difficult. You see, it's the swallowing.

MRS. VERYVERY : You think everything's being done that can be done ? We musn't leave a stone unturned.

NURSE : It's a case for careful nursing. He worries for Miss Wenna. Keeps on asking for her.

MRS. VERYVERY : But I told you we had to send her to her aunt.

NURSE : Yes, that seems to satisfy him for the moment. Then he suddenly asks where she is.

MRS. VERYVERY : You can understand Dr. Welbeck not wishing her to run any risk ?

NURSE : Oh, of course.

MRS. VERYVERY : What about tracheotomy ? Doesn't Dr. Vagus think that would do any good ?

NURSE : He wouldn't act without consulting with Dr. Welbeck.

MRS. VERYVERY : (*To herself*) I'll hope he'll catch that train. (*To NURSE*) Then you can't suggest anything ?

NURSE : Only inoculation.

MRS. VERYVERY : It's no use asking him.

WENNA : (*Off*) Down, Monarch.

(ENTER.)

How's Papa ?

MRS. VERYVERY : Wenna !

WENNA : I rushed off directly your wire came. There was no taxi at the station, so I ran half the way. How is Papa ?

MRS. VERYVERY : I'm afraid your father's worse.

WENNA : (*With cry*) Oh, Papa darling. (*Moves towards door.*)

MRS. VERYVERY : No, Wenna, You musn't disturb him now.

WENNA : I must see him.

NURSE : He's asleep, Miss Wenna.

MRS. VERYVERY : (*To NURSE*) Could you stay with Mr. Veryvery five minutes till one of us comes up ?

NURSE : Yes, he oughtn't to be left long in case he wakes and wants something.

MRS. VERYVERY : Thank you, Nurse.

(EXIT NURSE.)

What is this, Wenna ? Rushing off like a mad creature. What does it mean ?

WENNA : I never meant to stay. I thought we should be back in a few hours, but we couldn't get in.

MRS. VERYVERY : We ?

WENNA : Mr. Larkspur. He had to hunt up the assistant at Guy's Laboratory, and it took so long.

MRS. VERYVERY : Do you mean to say that you got Larkspur to get you into Guy's Laboratory ?

WENNA : Yes, I had to see for myself what vivisection meant.

MRS. VERYVERY : And now perhaps you know when it may be too late.

WENNA : Oh, don't ! I can't bear it. Has he asked for me ?

MRS. VERYVERY : Of course he's asked for you.

WENNA : And what did you say ?

MRS. VERYVERY : Said you had gone to Aunt Amy's for fear of infection.

WENNA : Gone away ? Oh, what did Papa think of me. He must have thought I'd deserted him.

MRS. VERYVERY : So you had.

WENNA : It's cruel of you to say that, Mamma.

MRS. VERYVERY : It's not so cruel as what the Village will say about you and Larkspur.

WENNA : I don't care what the Village says.

MRS. VERYVERY : I don't know what you do care for, except absurd ideas.

(ENTER AMELIA.)

AMELIA : Dr. Welbeck's upstairs, ma'am.

MRS. VERYVERY : When did he come ?

AMELIA : About five minutes ago. He said he'd go straight up to the master's room.

MRS. VERYVERY : You ought to have told me.

(EXIT MRS. VERYVERY *hurriedly*.)

EXIT AMELIA.

Pause, WENNA passes up and down.)

WENNA : (*Starting*) If he thinks he's going to do it like that. (*Rushes to door.*)

MRS. VERYVERY : (*Off*) You had better.

WELBECK : (*Off*) Very well.

(ENTER WELBECK.)

He moves towards WENNA as if he was going to lay his hand on her shoulder. She takes a few steps away. He stops still.)

WELBECK : I've come to tell you——

WENNA : Papa's not dead ?

WELBECK : You will have to prepare yourself,
Wenna——

WENNA : Papa ! Papa ! (*To WELBECK*) Oh, why
didn't you call me before it was too late.

WELBECK : It's not too late.

WENNA : Then I must see him.

WELBECK : (*Raising hand*) One moment, Wenna.
Do you wish to go upstairs simply to bid him
farewell or to give him back his life ?

WENNA : How can you ask me ?

WELBECK : You know my meaning.

WENNA : (*Wringing her hands*) Oh, help, help, help !
What can I say ? What can I do ? If I could
only die instead of papa.

WELBECK : My dear child, why distress us all when
it's so easy ?

WENNA : (*Bitterly*) Yes, so easy. And so easy to
forget all I've seen.

WELBECK : (*Looking out of window*) Then go up
and see your father.

(*SCENE blackened. Three weeks later.*)

(*DISCOVERED LARKSPUR and WENNA.*)

LARKSPUR : When I saw such a splendid bulletin
simply had to come in.

WENNA : Dear old Hilary, just like you !

LARKSPUR : It's splendid, Wenna.

WENNA : Isn't it glorious ! Too good to be true almost.

LARKSPUR : Ah ! it's true enough.

WENNA : Yes, it's like waking up after a nightmare.

LARKSPUR : Your father will be downstairs soon, I suppose ?

WENNA : Why, he's coming down to-day. May be down any moment.

LARKSPUR : Capital !

WENNA : I feel I could dance about like a little girl. Hurrah, hurrah !

LARKSPUR : You make me feel the same way.

WENNA : Well, stay and dance with me.

LARKSPUR : I must certainly stay to congratulate the dear old boy. Excuse me.

WENNA : I'll excuse you anything.

LARKSPUR : It's a triumph for you, Wenna ; and a triumph for your father. If he'd been inoculated it might have just killed him.

WENNA : (*Looking fondly at LARKSPUR*) I know who to thank.

LARKSPUR : Oh, rot ! You stuck to your guns and proved the doctors wrong.

WENNA: They say it was his magnificent constitution. Not one in a thousand would have pulled through.

LARKSPUR: Of course, of course. Anyway, the man recovered from the bite, the doctors it was who lied.

WENNA: But Guy's been very sympathetic. Not a word of reproach. It's only Mamma who sniffs.

LARKSPUR: I was only joking, my dear Wenna. I hope you may have years of happiness with Dr.—

WENNA: Stop, Hilary.

LARKSPUR: I was only going to say——

WENNA: I know.

LARKSPUR: (*Suddenly*) Wenna! Do you mean he's lost the game after all.

WENNA: I'm not sure I follow you.

LARKSPUR: Isn't this the end—for me?

WENNA: I don't understand.

LARKSPUR: Yes, you do.

WENNA: Do I?

LARKSPUR: Yes. You *must* realise what I mean.

WENNA: (*Looking down*) I'm under a great obligation to you.

LARKSPUR: You're under no obligation. You've overpaid me every moment by your presence.

WENNA: You're far too kind.

LARKSPUR: (*Vehemently*) Wenna! I love you.

WENNA: Don't! You've been such a friend.

LARKSPUR: (*Drawing a quick breath*) That's my answer—Friend! Go back to your caravan, you fool. What business had you, a freak, a crank, to hope for love.

WENNA: Don't, please, Hilary. It cuts me to the quick. You've been so fine, so unselfish.

LARKSPUR: Oh, very fine, very unselfish.

WENNA: Hilary, you make me feel horrible, as if I'd wronged you. I've always set you on a pedestal.

LARKSPUR: I know. At the best a cold statue. But never one you'd warm into life with your tears and kisses. Forgive me. I need your forgiveness. It's your love I *want*.

WENNA: It's I who should ask forgiveness.

LARKSPUR: Tell me, at least, will you marry that—

(ENTER WELBECK.)

WENNA: Hilary—

(WELBECK stands at table a minute. LARKSPUR walks to and fro, advances towards WENNA, then turns, walks to the door, and gives one final look at WENNA. EXIT LARKSPUR.)

WELBECK : Your father will be down in a few minutes.

WENNA : I must put his chair ready.

WELBECK : (*Sotto voce*) It's largely a question of diagnosing these zymotic diseases in time. Fortunately, we were just in time.

WENNA : I always knew you would get him well.

WELBECK : Ah ! you didn't know how touch and go it was for twenty-four hours. Dr. Vagus thought—well, never mind. I want to put another case to you. And I've brought counsel.

WENNA : Counsel ?

WELBECK : A friend to speak for me. Shall I bring him in ?

WENNA : I really don't know who you mean, but don't let him stay long with Papa coming down.

(EXIT WELBECK—RE-ENTER *with dog*.)

WELBECK : You asked for the little chap. Here he is.

WENNA : Oh ! (*Takes it and strokes it, speaking bitterly.*) You can afford to be generous, because you can get all the dogs you want. Poor unfortunate waifs and strays.

WELBECK : Ah, Wenna ! You only see one side ; the emotional side.

WENNA : I hope I do see the emotional side, as you call it. It's enough to make angels weep. Perhaps they do.

WELBECK: *I* have a vision, not of angels, but of suffering humanity ; humanity cured of suffering ; humanity prevented from suffering by a few experiments.

WENNA: And *I* see humanity trying to climb to ease and comfort on the tortured bodies of helpless, trustful creatures—tortured year after year.

WELBECK: Tortured——

WENNA: Oh, it's no good saying most of them are pin-prick operations : injections of poison are the cruellest. I know now.

WELBECK: But animals don't feel as we feel.

WENNA: (*Ironically*) Of course, you know exactly.

WELBECK: We have to consider the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

WENNA: I suppose that's why Germany walked over Belgium.

WELBECK: It isn't analogous. Doctors are the custodians of human health. We are acting for others. Your father is more important than a dog or a horse.

WENNA: You look only at humanity. Once we looked only at the tribe. One day statesmen and doctors will think of the whole living world.

WELBECK: We haven't reached that pitch of perfection yet.

WENNA: No, we are still slave-owners.

WELBECK: You can't do practical work and be a voice crying in the wilderness.

WENNA: You can heal the sick without being a vivisector.

WELBECK: I suppose we doctors are devils, although we're content to work day and night without fame or fortune.

WENNA: No, Guy, I think the Medical profession one of the noblest. I know it means self-forgetfulness all day long—listening sympathetically to the aches and pains of others: never finishing like the business man.

WELBECK: I'm glad you think us something better than Grand Inquisitors.

WENNA: It's far more responsible to write prescriptions than sign contracts and cheques. And you attend to the poor for nothing, or next than nothing.

WELBECK: Then, Wenna, if you think I'm wrong on one point remember that none of us is perfect. If yours is the greater love, then give me the great gift of yourself.

WENNA: (*Shuddering*) Impossible! In the darkness of the night I should see! See all I've seen; live it over again. Your hands would be red, and while I loved I should loathe.

WELBECK: (*Fiercely*) Which means that you've jilted me for Larkspur.

WENNA : If you choose to think so.

WELBECK : I do choose to think so, and, what's more, you can't deny it.

WENNA : I have an unbounded respect for Mr. Larkspur, but he knows I shall never marry him.

WELBECK : Then do you love me ?

WENNA : I can't help loving you.

WELBECK : (*Approaching*) And I love you.

WENNA : Why do you wring my heart ?

WELBECK : Hasn't it crossed your mind how you've ridden rough-shod over *my* feelings ?

WENNA : *Your* feelings ?

WELBECK : Yes, mine ! Do you think it was nothing to me to see your distress ? Nothing to have you in my laboratory and have you anathematise me before that fellow ? Is it nothing to have all my love for you now pulling me away from duty ?

WENNA : If your love is pulling you away from duty you must give me up. My love for you, too, pulls me from my duty.

WELBECK : Your duty ?

WENNA : Yes. You feel it's your duty to fight for humanity, and I feel it's my duty to fight for those who cannot fight for themselves.

WELBECK : Humanity is different. God made man in His image.

WENNA : Yes. And God is love.

WELBECK : You'll sacrifice everything when you've confessed that you love me ?

WENNA : Because I love you I ask you to go. Listen, Guy. I'm a woman. In my heart the unborn lie asleep. My nature is to awaken life and to protect it : protect it all.

MRS. VERYVERY : (*Off*) You must keep your shawl on, Robert.

(ENTER VERYVERY. WENNA *seizes hold of him.*)

WENNA : Hurrah ! Come along, Papa. Here's your chair.

VERYVERY : A fire ? Mercy, Esther ! This is cremation. I'm not a phoenix.

WELBECK : I think you are, by the way you've got through that fever.

WENNA : (*Sitting him down*) There ! You bunched-up old darling. We'll take your shawl off now. (*Unfastens safety-pin and claps hands*) Oh, doesn't it look lovely to see Papa sitting here again.

VERYVERY : (*To WELBECK*) You didn't think I was going to walk down those stairs again.

WELBECK : Not in so short a time.

MRS. VERYVERY : I'm sure we can never be thankful enough to you, Guy.

VERYVERY : I'm more than thankful—I haven't been slit up or poisoned.

WELBECK : Don't forget that giant's constitution. Not many men of your years would have been able to twit their doctor.

VERYVERY : No, no, I'm not deprecating your skill, only you can't expect a poor old leopard like me to change his spots.

MRS. VERYVERY : (*Sorting things on table*) Pipe, matches, book—there, you've left your pouch upstairs.

WENNA : I'll get it.

MRS. VERYVERY : No, I've got to go up.

(EXIT MRS. VERYVERY.)

WELBECK : (*Holding out his hand*) Now, if I hear you aren't so well, I shall know you've been trying to gallop before you can walk.

VERYVERY : But *you* aren't going to gallop off like this? Why, Wenna told me you were staying another——

WELBECK : Yes, but I must go up. Work, correspondence—what I mean is—— Oh, Wenna will explain. Good-bye.

VERYVERY : You two haven't quarrelled while I've been on the shelf? (*Pause*) Lovers always have tiffs. It's part of love-making.

WENNA : (*Quietly*) No, Guy and I haven't quarrelled.

VERYVERY : That's all right.

WENNA : Only——

VERYVERY : Only what ?

WENNA : We see things so differently.

VERYVERY : I should hope so. Two notes one harmony.

WELBECK : Wenna means the two notes will make discord. She thinks my research work is worse than a hangman's business.

WENNA : I've been into Guy's Laboratory, and seen the tortured creatures in cages.

VERYVERY : You have, have you ? Well, since he's shown you——

WELBECK : I didn't. She got that young fellow, Larkspur, to get round my assistant.

VERYVERY : My dear child !

WENNA : Oh, I daresay it was wrong of me, Papa, but——

VERYVERY : Guy will forgive you, I daresay, if you give him time. He's got to forgive me my sins.

WELBECK : I'd forgive Wenna anything, she knows.

VERYVERY : Then you two kiss. Come, a real lovers' kiss. (*Pause*) Why, Pony, have you changed your affections so soon ?

WENNA : Guy knows my heart, and he knows why I cannot be to him what I would.

WELBECK : (*To WENNA*) Yes, I know, Wenna.

VERYVERY : My dear child, you're suffering from strain. You've been worrying over me too much. Guy, you prescribe a tonic.

WENNA : (*Shaking head*) No, Papa. If you'd seen what I've seen, no medicines would take away your memory.

VERYVERY : Oh, I don't believe in guinea-pig poisoning any more than you do. But we all have to give and take in life. If you make Guy happy, how do you know he won't prefer you to a guinea-pig later on? Make him reckless, and every dog and cat in the neighbourhood—eh, what, Guy?

WELBECK : My life is in my work, Mr. Veryvery.

VERYVERY : Yes, yes, I know. But science may lead you into other lines of investigation in time.

WELBECK : (*Shaking head*) I'm afraid.

VERYVERY : Come, I only say it may. You're both on the threshold of life. You both love one another—so you say—very well, for your mutual happiness there must be some compromise on both sides. (*Raising hand*) I'm up against this all the year round. Have as much principle as you like, both of you, but remember, opinions alter

with years, judgments ripen, and too often people discover their mistakes when it's too late. (*Pause, he turns to WENNA*) Kiss, and leave it to Father—Father Time.

(*WELBECK approaches WENNA. She puts out her hand and turns her head away.*)

CURTAIN

(*On the rise of the curtain WELBECK is kissing her hand.*)

THE KING OF HEARTS
A FANTASTICAL MYSTERY

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

KING OF HEARTS	playing aslo	<i>King of Clubs</i>
QUEEN OF HEARTS	,,	<i>Queen of Clubs</i>
PRINCE OF HEARTS	,,	<i>Prince of Clubs</i>
KING OF DIAMONDS	,,	<i>King of Spades</i>
QUEEN OF DIAMONDS	,,	<i>Queen of Spades</i>
PRINCE OF DIAMONDS	,,	<i>Prince of Spades</i>
MAIDS OF HONOUR	,,	<i>Maids of Honour</i>
dressed 1 to 10 HEARTS	,,	<i>dressed 1 to 10 Clubs</i>
do. do. DIAMONDS	,,	<i>do. do. Spades</i>
PATIENCE GREY	reborn as	<i>April Chantry</i>
(Age 19 years)		
SAPPHO GREY	,,	<i>John Chantry</i>
(Age 16 years)		<i>(Father of April)</i>
SILVIA GREY	,,	<i>Millicent Chantry</i>
(Age 14 years)		<i>(Mother of April)</i>
ROY VALENTINE	,,	<i>Merl Power</i>
(Lover of Patience)		
REBECCA, A Servant		
AN OLD BEGGAR WOMAN	,,	<i>Handsome Gipsy</i>
MRS. GREY		<i>Mother of Patience</i>
CLAUD CARAPACE		<i>A fat round man</i>
MONTAGUE HARDACRE		<i>A tall square man</i>
TIMOTHY PUSHBY		<i>A lank, half-believing man</i>
EBENEZER TRICKALL		<i>A little excitable man</i>
SIR ALGERNON LEGALLY		<i>A conceited, polished man</i>
MAURICE MORIBUND		<i>A silent, cynical man</i>
HORACE BARKER		<i>A short-thinking, short-haired man</i>
ANDREW		<i>A Butler</i>
PLEASURE-SEEKERS, CHILDREN, MUSICIANS, FAIRIES		

THE KING OF HEARTS A FANTASTICAL MYSTERY

ACT I

SCENE I

TIME—*Christmas Eve, 1625*

(*Comfortable sitting-room. DISCOVERED PATIENCE GREY, aged 19, and ROY VALENTINE her lover. They are seated by the fire L.B. PATIENCE is wrapped up in an armchair, and ROY is sitting on a stool at her feet. A sofa is in front of window C.B. A door on the R.F. Near sofa is a small table. The lighting is low, and the room is shadowy in the corners.*)

ROY : (*Taking her hand in his*) You don't look a bit well to-night, Pat, dear, and you breathe like a puffy bird.

PATIENCE : That's pleasure at having you with me.

ROY : Your cough can't be pleasure, too.

PATIENCE : Never mind, Roy, don't let's talk about it

ROY : Alright. Where are Sappho and Silvia ?

PATIENCE : Trying on their dresses for to-morrow.

ROY : I had forgotten for two minutes it was Christmas Eve.

(ENTER SAPPHO *breathlessly.*)

SAPPHO : Patience, do tie my hair in a nice bow. Silvia is so horrid, she won't take her eyes off the glass.

ROY : (*Jokingly*) Let me try my hand.

SAPPHO : (*Drawing back*) No, no. You couldn't do it.

PATIENCE : Kneel down, dear.

(SAPPHO *goes down on one knee facing audience.*)

SAPPHO : Last Christmas you were quite well, Pat. I shan't enjoy to-morrow a bit. (*Turns her head and they kiss.*)

PATIENCE : Oh yes, you must. Think of Papa coming home with presents.

SAPPHO : May we wait up for him ?

PATIENCE : He may be very late. If you're not asleep he'll kiss you in bed.

(ENTER SILVIA, *age sixteen; she is flushed, and has one stocking off.*)

SYLVIA : (*To SAPPHO*) Didn't you hear me calling, Sappho ? (*Holding out stocking*) Look here, there's a big hole in it, and it's my very best pair. Sapphie, lend me a pair of yours.

SAPPHO : You know I've only got one nice pair.

PATIENCE : Let me look at it.

SAPPHO : Put on the other pair.

SILVIA : I won't. You just want to look nicer, mean thing.

SAPPHO : I'm sure I don't. How absurd you are !

SILVIA : (*Stamping her heel*) Oh, it's a shame ! (*Sinks down and weeps.*)

SAPPHO : You'll make your nose red if you cry.

(EXIT SAPPHO.)

ROY : Come, little sister, this won't do. We'll consult little mother !

PATIENCE : Give me my work-basket, Silvia, and I'll mend it for you. It won't take me two minutes.

SILVIA : Where is it ? (*Looks hither and thither.*)

ROY : (*Hunting about*) Who'll find it first ?

PATIENCE : It's in the corner.

SILVIA : Which corner ? I don't see it.

PATIENCE : (*Pointing*) Over there.

SILVIA : (*Taking it and hopping*) I shall step on a nail in a minute. (*She brings basket to PATIENCE.*)

ROY : (*Ironically*) Poor thing !

(SILVIA holds her foot near fire.)

SILVIA : My leg's cold.

(PATIENCE *darns stocking.*)

Sapph doesn't care a bit as long as she looks pretty and Christmassy herself.

PATIENCE : I wonder what Papa will bring us all ?

SILVIA : Oh, I wonder. Wasn't it fun last year ! And how long ago it seems, ages and ages.

ROY : Think, Pat, one whole year.

PATIENCE : (*To ROY*) Yes, we've known each other one whole year.

ROY : Our eyes met directly you came into the room.

PATIENCE : Did they ?

ROY : Didn't they ?

PATIENCE : (*Softly, looking down over work*) Yes.

ROY : (*Earnestly*) And you love me still ?

PATIENCE : (*Smiling*) Just a little.

(ENTER SAPPHO *with a rush.*)

SAPPHO : Patience, darling, what scent shall I put on my handkerchief to-morrow ?

SILVIA : Look at Sappho !

SAPPHO : What's the matter ?

SILVIA : Look !

SAPPHO : What's wrong, Patience ?

SILVIA : Your sash is half undone and getting dirty.
(*Laughs.*)

SAPPHO : I do think you horrid.

SILVIA : I'll do it up.

SAPPHO : You shan't touch it. Patience, dear, you do it.

PATIENCE : In one moment, when I've finished Silvia's stocking.

SAPPHO : Shall I put on musk or lavender ?

ROY : Put on a drop of everything you've got.

PATIENCE : Do you feel musk or lavender ?

SAPPHO : I can't make sure.

PATIENCE : Why not lavender ? I think you look lavender.

SILVIA : I was going to put on lavender.

SAPPHO : (*Angrily*) We can't *both* look lavender.

PATIENCE : No, dear, but you can both look loving. Kiss one another, and then, Silvy, put on your stocking.

(SAPPHO *and* SILVIA *hug.*)

SILVIA : And you too, dear, darling Pat. (*Kisses PATIENCE.*)

ROY : Am I going to be left out in the cold ?

(SILVIA *kisses* ROY *and puts on stocking.* SAPPHO *kisses* PATIENCE *and* ROY.)

SILVIA : Thank you so much. That horrid little hole has quite gone.

PATIENCE : (*Kissing her*) See how soon you can get into bed. Sapph will be up in a few minutes.

SILVIA : You'll come up to us, Pat ?

PATIENCE : Of course I will.

SILVIA : (*Bounding off and giving ROY a kiss on the way*) Good-night, good-night.

(EXIT SILVIA.)

SAPPHO : (*To PAT*) Is my sash really dirty, or did she say it to tease me ?

PATIENCE : (*Patting it*) A little dusty. There ! It's alright now. (*Ties it.*)

SAPPHO : Why do things go wrong when you want them to go right, *very* right ?

PATIENCE : (*Sadly*) Yes, when you want things to go right they go—oh, so wrong. (*Coughs.*)

SAPPHO : (*Glancing at her quickly*) Poor Pat, I'm sure your cough's worse to-night.

PATIENCE : You look sweet. Now go to bed. I'll come up in a quarter of an hour to say good-night, and then we can decide upon the scent for to-morrow.

ROY : Father Christmas can't come till you've gone to sleep.

SAPPHO : Why ?

ROY : Because he can't.

SAPPHO : How exciting. Alright. (*Rushes off.*)

(EXIT SAPPHO.)

ROY : I wonder your father can stay away so long.
The hours I'm away from you are so much sunshine out of my life.

PATIENCE : (*Sighing*) Don't say that, Roy ; it makes me sad.

ROY : Why sad ?

PATIENCE : Because—— (*Stops short*) And is it not true for me as well ?

ROY : I know you love me.

PATIENCE : Every time you speak my name it sends a thrill right through me. Nobody else says it quite like you.

(*Knock at door.*)

ROY : Come in.

(*ENTER REBECCA, the maid.*)

REBECCA : There's an old woman outside that won't go away. She says she's cold, but I don't like the look of her.

ROY : Won't go away ?

PATIENCE : There's no need to be afraid of her.

REBECCA : She's ugly, miss. She's dreadful ugly.

ROY : (*Moving towards door*) I'll satisfy the old body.

PATIENCE : No, Roy. Rebecca, give her some bread to take away.

ROY : What a draught ! You've left the back door open.

REBECCA : She doesn't want any food, she wants to warm herself, she says.

(ENTER OLD WOMAN, bent. REBECCA screams, addresses woman.)

How dare you follow me in like that ?

OLD WOMAN : (*Curtseying*) Good-evening, sir. Good evening, miss.

ROY : Well, what is it you want ? You know you're trespassing.

(PATIENCE coughs.)

OLD WOMAN : I hope you won't turn me out in the cold.

ROY : Rebecca, shut that back door at once. The night air is making Miss Patience worse.

(EXIT REBECCA.)

PATIENCE : What can we do for you ?

OLD WOMAN : It's perishingly cold to-night.

ROY : I know, you should have thought of that when you left the door open. Here's a lady that's sick. You've no right to come in like this.

OLD WOMAN : (*Whining*) Don't be angry with me.

ROY : (*Exasperated*) Well, what is it ?

OLD WOMAN : It's enough to freeze anybody to-night. (*Teeth chatter, etc.*)

ROY : You can't stay here.

OLD WOMAN : I'm near frozen to death. Feel my hand.

ROY : (*Putting hands in pockets*) I don't want to feel your hand.

(ENTER REBECCA.)

Show this person out.

OLD WOMAN : (*To ROY*) I'll go. I never thought I should come to begging.

ROY : (*Throws coin on table*) Here, you can get something with that. Now go.

OLD WOMAN : (*Taking coin and slowly walking out.*) I didn't mean to trespass. The door was open and the fire was bright, and I'm eaten up with rheumatics. (*Turning round at door*) I've got no home, and the wind's like a wolf.

(EXEUNT REBECCA and WOMAN.)

PATIENCE : Poor old soul. Don't you think we ought to let her sit by the kitchen fire ?

ROY : No. She's probably going from house to house telling that tale. You've got to be firm with those sort of people. Once they see they can make an impression upon you it's all up. Coming in like that !

PATIENCE : It was really Rebecca's fault for not latching the door.

ROY : Besides, Rebecca's frightened of her. She wouldn't like her in the kitchen.

PATIENCE : Roy, I feel we oughtn't to have turned her away. And it's Christmas Eve, too.

ROY : What has Christmas Eve got to do with it, dear ? She can buy herself some food.

PATIENCE : Would you have turned me out ?

ROY : What *do* you mean ?

PATIENCE : Fetch her back. (*Pause*) If you love me.

(ROY *bounds off without a word.*)

Here, Roy, put on your coat. (*To herself*) Oh, you dear boy ! What wouldn't you do for me !

(PATIENCE *returns to chair.*)

PATIENCE : Dear little Sappho and Silvy, I hope life has something very good in store for you both.

(*Knock at door.* REBECCA ENTERS *without waiting for an answer.*)

PATIENCE : Yes, is that you, Rebecca ?

REBECCA : Yes, miss, it's me. I thought as how you might be wanting something. Let me make you a nice hot bowl of bread and milk, or an egg beaten up in milk with some sugar in. They say an egg's as good as meat.

PATIENCE : It's very kind of you, Rebecca, but I'm not hungry.

REBECCA : You're so thin, miss, there's nothing of you, if I may say so. You ought to take more nourishment.

PATIENCE : (*Wearily*) Ought I?

REBECCA : Do try.

PATIENCE : Not now, thanks.

(*Wind moans.*)

REBECCA : It's snowing fast outside. The sky was like lead this afternoon, and they say we're going to have some hard weather.

PATIENCE : (*Dreamily*) I love to watch the snow-flakes.

REBECCA : I do love the snow at Christmas. Christmas snow isn't like any other snow, is it, miss? (*Looking up and holding fire-brush*) Oh, of course, poor Miss Patience, you don't go out now. Well, you'll ring if you want anything?

PATIENCE : Yes, thank you, Rebecca—but I know I shan't. I'm tired, just tired.

(EXIT REBECCA.)

PATIENCE : A year ago!

(*Sits up and has a slight shivering fit. Coughs feebly once or twice, then relapses into chair and sits limply. A diaphanous figure resembling PATIENCE glides from behind a screen in a dark recess by her side. It glides into centre of room and looks around questioningly. ENTER through panel in wall figure dressed like maid of honour in white with pink hearts on robe. She smilingly holds out her hand to PATIENCE'S double.*)

MAID OF HONOUR FROM THE COURT OF HEARTS : At last.

(PATIENCE *seems about to speak.*)

Yes ?

PATIENCE : It's silly of me. Have I been dreaming ?
I feel so light and well.

MAID OF HONOUR : You've quite recovered.

PATIENCE : (*Taking her hand*) I seem to know you,
and yet I quite forget your name.

MAID OF HONOUR : I know yours. You are Patience
Grey. I have an invitation for you.

PATIENCE : (*Quickly*) For me ?

MAID OF HONOUR : Yes. To a dance.

PATIENCE : How lovely ! I could dance all night now.
Who has sent the invitation ?

MAID OF HONOUR : The King of Hearts.

PATIENCE : The King of Hearts ?

(MAID OF HONOUR *nods and smiles.*)

And you——

MAID OF HONOUR : Come from his Court.

PATIENCE : Is this a dream ? *He* has sent an invitation to *me* ?

MAID OF HONOUR : Yes, won't you come ?

PATIENCE : Why, of course, only it all seems— (*Catches sight of figure in chair as she is moving off. She pulls back.*) Ah ! now I understand. (*Leans over*) Good-bye, little Patience that was. Such an impatient little Patience.

MAID OF HONOUR : Come, they are waiting for you.

PATIENCE : I am ready.

(*EXEUNT through panel.*)

(*Wind moans. There is a gusty chime of bells. Short pause. Footsteps.*)

(*ENTER ROY somewhat quickly.*)

ROY : (*More gravely*) I say, Pat, that poor old body wasn't shamming after all. She's dead, not a hundred yards away. (*Moves towards chair.*) Huddled up— (*Catches sight of her, and approaches on tiptoe.*) Asleep ! No, I won't wake you. I'll sit down here, and when you stir I'll kiss you awake.

(*Sits down on stool, where he sees her face plainly. He starts, and seizes her hand.*)

Patience ! (*Louder*) Patience ! Are you all right ? (*Drops her hand*) Oh ! (*Stands up and seizes both hands*) Patience, Precious, speak ! It's Roy,

I've come back. (*Kneels down*) Oh! Too late, too late! (*Leaps up wildly and moves towards door. Stops short and turns back slowly, twitching nervously. Takes her hand and looks earnestly into her face.*)

CURTAIN DESCENDS A MOMENT

ACT I

SCENE II—Court of the King of Hearts

(During the scene the members of the Court pass up and down the marble stairs to low music. There is a brazier of incense.)

Opposite are three marble pillars wound with white, pink and damask roses. On scenery behind are white mountain peaks flushed with sunrise. Down each peak rushes a stream. A small arc of the sun is just apparent. The horizon is gold and crimson. On the left are golden gates. On the right are marble stairs that slope up and off stage. The lighting is subdued and rosy. A floral clock shows the years as minutes. ENTER PRINCE and MAIDS OF HONOUR. Behind, stands MOTHER OF PATIENCE.)

1ST MAID OF HONOUR : Someone seeks entrance.

PRINCE : Unbar the Gates of Light.

(ENTER MAID OF HONOUR and PATIENCE blindfolded and with a blue veil.)

Our Father and Mother approach.

(Solemn Melody.)

PATIENCE : *(In listening attitude)* What a sound of love !

(ENTER KING and QUEEN descending marble stairs. KING clothed in damask and gold. QUEEN in white with crimson heart.)

(KING motions to PRINCE, who unbinds bandage and lifts veil.)

PATIENCE : Oh ! *(moves head, half dazed)* Morning !

QUEEN : *(Tenderly)* Patience !

PATIENCE : Mother of Love !

QUEEN : Come !

*(PATIENCE rushes forward and clasps her knees—
QUEEN enfolds her.)*

All the while you were away my eyes watched over you. You cannot think how yearningly.

PATIENCE : Mother of Mothers !

QUEEN : Yes, even as the mother of mothers I saw you suffering. But rise, sweet Patience, your Father greets you.

KING : *(Holding out his hands)* Welcome !

PATIENCE : *(Kneeling and bowing her head)* Protecting Father !

KING : Welcome to the Home World. My child, you have lived your name. Your next Earth-form shall be filled with health and beauty.

PATIENCE : How long have I been away ?

KING : Nineteen years.

PATIENCE : Nineteen years !

KING : (*Smiling*) Not long. Some leave this Court a hundred years.

QUEEN : See ! Your Earth Mother.

(*Figure in blue comes forward.*)

PATIENCE : Little Mother. Oh, I have missed you.

MOTHER : I have been near you, though you could not see me.

PATIENCE : You have been so long a memory.

MOTHER : I know, but time has wings in the Home World.

(*A Maid of Honour unbars gates. ENTER ROY blindfolded, accompanied by one of the MAIDS OF HONOUR.*)

QUEEN : Yes, for you have left Earth many years, and your lover comes through the Gates of Light.

(*His eyes are unbound.*)

ROY : I wake ! I wake !

KING : Welcome, son of mine.

ROY : (*Kneeling before him*) Father and King.

QUEEN : You did not quite forget.

ROY : (*Turning to her*) Queen Mother.

KING : Refresh yourself in the Courts of Morning,
where day is ever breaking. Rise.

ROY : (*Rising*) How calm ! and how fresh !

KING : It is the threshold of life.

ROY : How free it is !

KING : It is the Court of Youth.

ROY : How full of life !

KING : It is the Home of Hope.

QUEEN : It has another dearer name. Ask it not, but
look.

(ROY *turns to* PATIENCE.)

ROY : Patience !

PATIENCE : Roy !

(*They embrace.*)

ROY : Why Patience, you are just Patience. Not a
rainbow or a ghost—just Patience.

PATIENCE : And you are just Roy. I *am* glad you
haven't got wings ; they're so unmanly.

ROY : (*Laughing*) I feel too light to need them.

PATIENCE : It's nice to be human still ; it's homely.

ROY : Isn't it ! I think we're both a snap-shot of our best selves. (*To KING*) Have you no throne ?

KING : We have indeed.

PATIENCE : But where ?

KING : Everywhere. (*Golden drapery is removed and thrones of rock appear. KING and QUEEN sit down.*)

PATIENCE : Oh !

ROY : (*To KING*) And are all these ladies free to do as they please ?

KING : They are free to work all day and all night. Some are the guardians of friendship, protecting it from suspicion and jealousy. Some bring old friends together. Others make sunshine in the hearts of unrequited love. Others heal old enmities and misunderstandings. There are many unseen birds of blessing that fly to men.

ROY : Then they are too busy to enjoy themselves and sing.

KING : Oh no. They have song in their hearts all day long. They sing as they go.

PATIENCE : How lovely ! Like skylarks.

KING : Yes, every heart has a song-bird in it.

PRINCE : (*To KING*) Another is approaching.

KING : Swing open the Portal.

PRINCE : (*Unbars the gates*) Enter.

(*ENTER a MAID OF HONOUR with SAPPHO and SILVIA, veiled. They appear about 25 years of age. Their eyes are unbound.*)

QUEEN : Come, my dear children, kiss me.

SAPPHO AND SILVIA : (*Rushing forward*). How delightful ! This is like a holiday in fairy-land.

QUEEN : That's what it is. You may do as you will here.

SAPPHO : Delicious ! (*To former Mother*) Little Mother ! (*They kiss.*)

SILVIA : (*To former Mother*) Your eyes are just as bright. The air is filled with odours of memories. Wouldn't poor Pat have enjoyed it ! It would have made her quite well.

KING : Would you leave this place to help your sister ?

SAPPHO : When we've only just got here.

KING : One day. (*Pause.*)

SILVIA : Yes.

SAPPHO : Yes.

KING : (*Pointing to PATIENCE*) See !

SAPPHO : Oh ! (*Hugs her.*)

PATIENCE : Sappho !

SILVIA : Pat, dear, you are sweeter than sunshine.

PATIENCE : Little Silvy, now we *are* altogether. Look, here's Roy.

(SAPPHO and SILVIA kiss ROY.)

ROY : (*To SAPPHO and SILVIA*) You don't look a bit older, and yet you both lived to be quite—er—middle-aged.

SAPPHO : I don't feel as if I could be old here. The air's so bracing.

SILVIA : No wonder Patience came here for a rest cure.

SAPPHO : What I like about this is, that you're all so natural instead of being—being——

ROY : Stilted angels.

(*They laugh.*)

KING : (*To SAPPHO and SILVIA*) Rest at the Queen's side, and she will tell you some of the mysteries of love, for soon you are to be parents of Patience, as you have chosen to help her.

PATIENCE : How good of you both, and how delightful.

SAPPHO : I *am* glad.

SILVIA : (*Curling up beside QUEEN*) Please tell me if I shall be the mother.

QUEEN : You will.

SAPPHO : And I shall be a man. (*Claps her hands*)
How nice ! I always wanted to be a man—in a way.

PATIENCE : You always were—in a way.

SAPPHO : (*To QUEEN, clouding over*) We shall have to say farewell to faery-land.

QUEEN : All the world is faery.

SILVIA : English folk are sleepy faeries.

QUEEN : Never mind, they're dreaming of love, and will wake to find it true.

ROY : (*To PRINCE*) Sir, do you know that people play with you on earth ?

PATIENCE : And swear over you.

PRINCE : Not much escapes me.

PATIENCE : Aren't you shocked ?

PRINCE : I know more than they know.

PATIENCE : Aren't you hurt ?

PRINCE : Why should I be ? After they have played with me they'll take me in earnest.

ROY : How does one become a member of your Court ?

PRINCE : When you remember you're a member.

ROY : (*Reflectively*) When you remember you're a member. Oh !

(*General laughter.*)

PATIENCE : (*To MAID OF HONOUR*) Thank you so much for bringing me here. I should never have thought of walking through the wall.

MAID OF HONOUR : To tell you the truth, I was nearly late. You were very sudden, though I had been watching you.

PRINCE : (*To MAID OF HONOUR*) It's about time we set off.

MAID OF HONOUR : (*Looking at Floral clock*) So it is. Of course, this is summer-time !

ROY : This constant change from one world to another must be confusing.

MAID OF HONOUR : Well, I musn't forget I have to remind England of her wild rose and her patron saint.

PRINCE : We address the soul-subconsciousness of England.

QUEEN : (*To SAPPHO and SILVIA*) Will you go with them too ?

SAPPHO AND SILVIA : So soon ?

KING : Yes, once again to the great adventure. You will not be forgotten, for my heart enfolds you.

(*KING and QUEEN kiss them.*)

You will have to pass through the other Courts, but you will not stay long.

SILVIA : Good-bye, Pat, see you later.

PATIENCE : Good-bye, my sweet little mamma.

SAPPHO : Good-bye, Pat.

PATIENCE : Good-bye, Papa, dear. I'll try to be a thoughtful baby and not wake you up at night with crying, though I shall be glad when teething's over.

SAPPHO : You'll be a very knowing baby, no doubt. You've lived more often than we have.

PATIENCE : I hope I shan't be old-fashioned.

(SILVIA runs back and whispers in PATIENCE'S ear, then gives her a playful pat on the face and laughs.)

PATIENCE : *(Laughing)* I'll try not to ; I'll do my best.

QUEEN : Children, your confidences are keeping the Court waiting. Farewell.

SAPPHO AND SILVIA : Farewell, Queen-Mother—Farewell, Kingly Father.

KING : Our blessings go with you.

(EXEUNT SAPPHO and SILVIA accompanied by PRINCE and MAID OF HONOUR)

(To ROY and PAT) You two will have to prepare to leave, for you'll be born in twenty-five years' time, which means twenty-five minutes in these Courts.

ROY : Dear old rainy Earth !

PATIENCE : To think that soon we shall be drinking tea and shopping again. Shopping again !

ROY : It's a business being born.

PATIENCE : And yet I can't help loving the Earth.

KING : We call it the Land of Opportunity.

ROY : (*To KING in distress*) But must I part from Patience ?

KING : You 'must both drink the cup of oblivion. Whether you meet on Earth, as you call it, depends on whether you fulfil a work of love.

PATIENCE : Oh, tell us what !

KING : In the far land most people forget they have ever entered this Court. I am only a rumour in the Land of Opportunity : here I am a reality. You must make fresh their memories.

ROY : How may it be done ?

KING : Your love for one another in your last Earth lives has won for you both a new gift. Your Queen-Mother shall give you each a Face of Remembrance, the portrait of each other, which you must wear at your heart. As often as you look at it you will remember.

PATIENCE : Oh, thank you, my dear Father.

QUEEN : See, here they are. (*Gives portraits—they take them tremulously and look.*)

ROY: Why, Patience, you are like our Queen-Mother.

PATIENCE: (*In whisper*) And you are like the King. I understand.

QUEEN: Is that surprising, since you are our children?

KING: One last word. It is my decree that all the world shall be lovers. You must show them the way. Now prepare to leave. Four brothers are we who keep the four courts of the world. Each will bestow a gift as you pass through. First you will go to my noble brother of light, King of Diamonds. Afterwards to the Kings of darkness, for though you have loved much in the past you have loved as lovers love, deaf to the World's cry.

QUEEN: (*Kissing them*) Farewell, sweet children.

KING: (*Taking their heads between his hands and kissing their foreheads*) Help the great Orphan, Humanity, to find me, and you shall find one another.

(MUSIC such as "Good-night, good-night, Beloved."
Ciro Pen suti.)

(*The SCENE is blackened. The roses are changed to rainbow wreaths and diamonds. Lighting grows gradually to brilliance. Sun suggested as shining overhead at noonday, gay and triumphant music. Strange and beautiful shapes of flora and fauna float about.*)

KING and QUEEN clothed as before, a diamond taking the place of a heart. MAIDS OF HONOUR wear diamonds over shimmering rainbow material

KING and QUEEN OF DIAMONDS on throne. Some of the Court are blowing through trumpets out of which flames dart forth.)

(PRINCE goes to Gates and admits ROY and PATIENCE. They cover their eyes.)

KING : Welcome, children of to-morrow.

PATIENCE : (To ROY) What are they doing ?

KING : We are preparing the future for which you will be born. In a few years the World will have attained its majority, and entered into its inheritance.

PATIENCE : I hear, but I cannot see.

KING : Yes, it is rather bright.

ROY : (Shading eyes) It's lightning more than sunshine.

KING : This is the Court of Truth, where it is high noon.

PATIENCE : People would draw their blinds on Earth for fear it would fade the carpet.

KING : And you are going there ?

PATIENCE : Yes, in a few years or minutes.

PRINCE : (To ROY and PATIENCE) You are in the presence of the King of Diamonds.

(ROY and PATIENCE kneel.)

KING : Rise, children. You are welcome to this Court of Wisdom, for I see my brother has already given you the lamp of love.

ROY : I didn't think Knowledge was like this. It flashes like laughter. \

QUEEN : Wisdom's the light of love. When it sparkles you call it genius.

PATIENCE : Where are the books ?

KING : Here in the university of the World we keep our libraries inside us.

PATIENCE : It saves dusting.

ROY : Convenient, too.

KING : Very.

ROY : But how do you manage when you want to get at them ?—the books, I mean.

KING : It's only a question of releasing the Truth. If you're clogged with theories, it sticks.

PATIENCE : (*Pointing to those who are blowing shapes like flowers*) And are these ladies releasing the Truth ?

KING : (*Looking round*) Yes, they're inspiring people with true ideas, only they get badly damaged in the brain and sometimes come out quite different—spiritual refraction, as we call it.

ROY : Oh, do let me try.

KING : Certainly, but try something simple, just a thought of good-will, because it's very important work.

QUEEN : (*To PATIENCE*) Would you like to try, too ?

PATIENCE : I shouldn't know how.

QUEEN : (*Pointing to PRINCE*) He will show you.

PRINCE : (*Showing her*) It's really quite simple if you're in earnest.

(*Blows some daisies out of a pipe—then looks a moment.*)

Those have come down as simple light-heartedness to a little boy in a hospital.

PATIENCE : How beautiful ! Do let me send him some.
(*Taking a pipe*) What do I do ? I want him to remember this Court.

PRINCE : Then think how much you'd like him to remember it, and blow.

(*PATIENCE blows and some forget-me-nots flutter down.*)

PATIENCE : Oh, it's just lovely, and how simple !

PRINCE : Yes, it's quite simple. You can do it any time, anywhere, to anybody.

PATIENCE : Why don't people do it on Earth all day long ?

PRINCE : They don't know what thought is. So they gossip and send unkind ugly things instead. They would be scared if they saw their own thoughts.

ROY : (*To MAID OF HONOUR*) Let me try, I'd like to send a bird or something.

MAID OF HONOUR : Think of how you want it to help, and leave it to shape itself.

ROY : All right. I want people to know that thoughts are things.

(He blows and a golden flame shoots out.)

MAID OF HONOUR : Very good.

ROY : I see. And then people say a bright idea has flashed into their minds, when really it's come from the Court of Diamonds. You don't get any more credit than they do in the other Court.

KING : Ah, my son ! Fame belongs to this Court, not to the outer world.

PATIENCE : (*To PRINCE*) Still, I wish people were grateful, you have such a nice face.

PRINCE : To use a figure of speech, we're worked off our wings bringing in the New Era, suggesting new ways in government and trade and religion and philosophy and healing and education. Breaking up the moulds of old thought-forms is a critical

business, but this is one of the times when it must be done.

KING: (To ROY and PATIENCE) You have been initiated into a deep mystery because in the past you sought wisdom. Go into a dark world and blow flames of light; into a joyless world and blow birds of joy; into a loveless world and blow flowers of tenderness. So shall you make a wintry world into summer.

(KING takes pipes from QUEEN and hands them to ROY and PATIENCE, who receive them smiling.)

ROY: I will endeavour.

PATIENCE: And so will I.

QUEEN: Farewell, dear children. (*Kisses them.*)

KING: Now take courageously what the Kings of Darkness shall bestow upon you, for we are all one brotherhood.

(SCENE begins to darken.)

PATIENCE: (*Clinging to ROY*) I am afraid. I cannot see. Where are we going?

(SCENE blackens. Court of the KING OF CLUBS. Sunset. An angry cloudy orange sky. Court festooned with orange and black. The lighting is low. Clubs form the pattern of decoration and dress. DISCOVERED PATIENCE still clinging to ROY. A long gust of wind is heard.)

ROY : (*Assuming confidence*) Pooh ! Red at night's the shepherd's delight.

PATIENCE : Only it isn't red, and we aren't shepherds. I feel more like a lost sheep.

ROY : Well, say bah !

PATIENCE : (*Plaintively*) Bah !

(PRINCE *dressed in black and white crosses stage.*)

PATIENCE : Oh !

ROY : (*Walking up to PRINCE*) Can you tell me, sir, where we are ?

PRINCE : (*Staring at him*) Use your eyes, and you'll see. The Court of Clubs.

(*Points to sign of Clubs. EXIT PRINCE.*)

ROY : (*To PATIENCE*) : A curt angel.

PATIENCE : You should have called him your Highness. Roy, suppose the Court of Clubs is a polite name for the wrong place ? (*Pause*) Do you think so ?

ROY : No, it's too draughty.

(MUSIC. *Softly at first. "L'Apprentice Sorcier."*)

(RE-ENTER PRINCE *with MAID OF HONOUR.*)

PATIENCE : (*Clinging again to ROY*). Is it the—the—the—
the——

ROY : They're sure to call him by another name.

(The MUSIC stops abruptly on an ominous chord.)

(ENTER KING and QUEEN with Egyptian head-dress. The KING carries the caduceus of Hermes.)

KING : Are any postulants ready for Initiation ?

PRINCE : Two are ready.

KING : Present them.

(PRINCE gives imperious wave of hand.)

PRINCE : *(To ROY and PATIENCE)* The King commands you. Take three paces and kneel.

(They kneel.)

KING : *(To ROY and PATIENCE)* You are here to be initiated.

PATIENCE : *(To ROY in whisper)* It's worse than waiting for the dentist.

KING : There is no reason to fear this great solemnity.

ROY : Thank you, your Majesty.

KING : This ceremony will bestow on you the power of the coronet.

PATIENCE : *(With one hand tightly grasping ROY)*
What is that ?

KING : Personality. The pride of personality.

PATIENCE : *(In whisper to ROY)* I thought we were persons.

KING : This ceremony will make you distinguished, unique, individual. It will separate you from others and from each other.

PATIENCE : (*Bursting out*) Then I don't want it.

ROY : Nor I.

KING : (*Sternly and scornfully*) It matters not. In the past you have been pre-occupied with yourselves. In the past you have wished to distinguish yourselves from others, to shine. You have gained the power.

PATIENCE : (*In broken voice*) Our father, the King of Hearts, has helped us to find each other, and you will divide us.

KING : I, too, am your father.

PATIENCE : (*Whisper to ROY*) Shall we be born black ?

KING : Who do you suppose I am ?

(*ROY and PATIENCE look at each other confused.*)

KING : I am the Power of Pride. Without me you would be flabby angels indeed. With me you shall attain divine individuality.

PATIENCE : But are you not a —

KING : Devil ? I am. I am darkness, I give light ; I am sorrow, I give solemnity ; I am adversity, I give power.

ROY : O dark Father, whence is your light ?

PATIENCE: The King of Diamonds, he is the giver of light.

KING: Are not coal and diamond kin? He who knows, he knows. (*Turning to PRINCE*) Mark out the circle.

(*PRINCE marks out circle with wand.*)

Take your places.

(*PRINCES and MAIDS OF HONOUR stand in circle. ROY and PATIENCE in centre, kneel.*)

KING: (*Touching head with rod*) On thee and thee I bestow the coronet of Personality.

(*QUEEN places coronets on their heads.*)

Arise in power.

(*They rise. The COURT disperses. KING and QUEEN and COURT EXEUNT, except PRINCE, as music plays Egyptian ballet.*)

PRINCE: (*Rubbing his hands*) Well, it's all over. Not so bad, eh?

ROY: (*With affected nonchalance*) Oh no—er—your Highness.

PRINCE: That's all right, you're one of us now.

ROY: (*With slight disgust*) Are we?

PRINCE: Of course. You humans are an ungrateful crew. We saved you from eternal insipidity, and you look down on us devils because we're black. Ours is an unthankful job.

PATIENCE : Poor devil ! (*Strokes him—ROY pulls her away*).

ROY : You seem to enjoy your wicked profession.

PRINCE : Enjoy ? Every devil revels in his devilry, and so the work gets well done. Try and understand us. We are your nigger problem.

(Light suddenly goes out. PATIENCE gives a cry. Sounds of demoniac laughter.)

(Light gradually returns. There is a rich, dreamy perfume. On right side of stage is a large wheel like a spinning wheel, with the signs of the Zodiac round it, also a large book chained to a rock. Decorative serpents twine the columns. The lighting is alternatively high and low. Vivid green and shadows. Spades form the decorative pattern and dress.)

(DISCOVERED ROY and PATIENCE.)

PATIENCE : I wonder if the light always changes like this.

ROY : It doesn't seem healthy.

(ENTER PRINCE.)

PRINCE : What's that ? Not healthy ?

PATIENCE : Oh ! (*Clings to ROY. ROY starts violently, makes an incoherent ejaculation.*)

PRINCE : Of course, it's not healthy. This is the Hall of Spades. We look after the work-a-day world of pleasure-pain.

ROY : And who are you ?

PRINCE : Who am I ? You'd like to know ? You *shall* know. I'm the breaker of boot-laces at last moments. I am the hider of buttons and studs. I tempt people into wrong purchases. I am the Laundry Fiend, he, he, he !

PATIENCE ! What a common devil !

ROY : You must be thoroughly idle. Satan finds——

PRINCE : On the contrary, I never have a moment to call my own. Worked to death from morning to night.

ROY : I suppose one has to be polite even to——

PRINCE : Just so, just so.

PATIENCE : Perhaps you're not so black as you paint yourself.

PRINCE : (*To PAT*) There's nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so.

ROY : Well ! I knew the devil could quote scripture, but I didn't think Shakespeare was in his line.

(ENTER MAID OF HONOUR.)

PRINCE : No ?

ROY : (*To MAID OF HONOUR*) What's the good of you all being so tricky, anyway ?

MAID OF HONOUR: Ask my infernal fraternal. (To PRINCE) Here's a young spark of a spirit on his way to Earth who wants to know the *good* of us.

PRINCE: (*Eyeing them critically*) We get some innocents through here, and no mistake. If you'd asked the good of the evil of us the proposition would have been more correctly stated.

ROY: As you like.

PRINCE: I am the Irritator of the Breakfast Table. The ladies give unsatisfying pleasure, and I give pain.

ROY: Two blacks don't make a white.

PRINCE: What do you know about the law of opposites? Nothing. (I use terrestrial terminology.) You come to us trying to be good, and you end by being great.

ROY: Great?

PRINCE: You're bound to be wicked if you have anything to do with us, and then there's some chance for you, otherwise you're only fit for Sunday School.

PATIENCE: Don't talk to him, Roy, he's a tease.

(Fennel Dance.

Softly first, then music gradually gets louder and louder ; the COURT come dancing in by ones and twos. There is a mad dance, after which ENTER KING and QUEEN, who are robed in black and white and crowned with rubies and emeralds.)

PRINCE : *(To KING)* Two more souls on their way to Earth.

KING : A never-ending stream. Yet people must be helped to wickedness.

(To ROY and PATIENCE—wearily.)

You know my gift ?—Pleasure ?

ROY : *(Doubtfully)* Good pleasure ?

PRINCE : *(Capering)* Devilish good !

KING : Silence. *(To ROY and PATIENCE)* I give pleasure—on credit. In spite of parents and parsons I approach youth offering substantial advances of pleasure. They snap at it usually.

PATIENCE : Don't you get defrauded ?

KING : Never. I know their patrimony, they don't. By merely taking my offer they seal a contract. I have a ledger for everyone *(Pointing to book on rock)* I debit them with pleasure and credit them with pain.

PATIENCE : Well, you may wear a crown, but you're only a spiritual money-lender.

ROY : And a shifty one at that:

QUEEN : Hush, Children, you're in a mighty presence,
and you know it not.

KING : I give desire and death.

ROY : A sad office.

KING : No, a joyous one, for men burst forth from my
dark hall as a flame of living power.

PATIENCE : So really you're the King of Terrors and
the Angel of Death, and your gift is fruitless
desire.

KING : Say rather the fruit of experience.

QUEEN : (*Holding a cincture of rubies*) I am the
World Gipsy, and the Lady of Fortune that turns
the wheel you see of birth and death.

(ROY *sighs.*)

KING : By which you grow to greatness. Before me
lies the record of your past lives. In your last life
I see a soul who asked help and found it not.
You will pay the price.

(*She binds on cinctures while they kneel in turn,
first on ROY and then on PATIENCE.*)

PATIENCE : (*Quickly to ROY*) What's it like ?

ROY : It has a thrill that reminds me of the dear old
homely Earth.

PATIENCE : (*Sadly*) Where we die !

(MAID OF HONOUR *hands cup to ROY and
PATIENCE.*)

KING : Yes, the seed dies to be born. Drink the draught of forgetfulness.

PATIENCE : (*Hesitating*) Now ?

KING : (*Inclines head.*)

(ROY and PATIENCE *fervently embrace and drink.*)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE I.—1925. 300 years after the night of the dance.

(Breakfast table at Moneyview Villa. Seated at head of table opening letters is MR. CHANTRY. At the other end pouring out tea is MRS. CHANTRY. There is a vacant place at table. MR. CHANTRY raises cup to his lips with his eyes fixed on the letter. Puts cup down quickly after a sip and gives something between a growl of exclamation and annoyance.)

MRS. CHANTRY : Bad news, dear ?

(MR. CHANTRY grunts and goes on reading. Puts letter down still reading and takes a bite of bacon.)

MR. CHANTRY : (Pushing bacon away and cracking egg with spoon furiously) Did you speak about the bacon ?

MRS. CHANTRY : (Emphatically) Podgers say it's their best.

MR. CHANTRY : Podgers say anything. We'll go elsewhere. It's disgraceful! (Glancing at watch) I haven't got time to chew leather. And if I had, why should I ? It means I'm longer for breakfast, I have to go off at a run, and have indigestion half the morning.

MRS. CHANTRY: Wouldn't you like to try Quaker Oats instead?

MR. CHANTRY: (*Exasperated, trying to be more grieved than angry*) You know, you know they heat my blood.

MRS. CHANTRY: All right, we'll try the Inter-colonial, though my piece's as tender as a chicken.

MR. CHANTRY: (*To himself*) Quaker Oats!

MRS. CHANTRY: I don't understand men.

MR. CHANTRY: You never will, dear, however much older you get.

MRS. CHANTRY: They can take any amount of whisky over night, and then they talk of porridge heating their blood in the morning.

MR. CHANTRY: (*Putting down letter he had taken up again*) And why should we heat our blood over oats? We aren't horses! Is that "The News" you've got there?

(MRS. CHANTRY *hands over paper with resignation.*)

MRS. CHANTRY: (*Sniffing*) I'd better pour out April's tea, it's getting strong.

MR. CHANTRY: (*Again putting down letter*). That girl's never punctual. And she's growing worse. It doesn't matter what you say to her, she only laughs or cries. They're the only two things women can do well.

MRS. CHANTRY: I'll go up and see whether she's——

MR. CHANTRY : I want to speak to you before April comes. I think she's seeing far too much of that young Wild.

MRS. CHANTRY : I like Jack Wild, he's well-mannered.

MR. CHANTRY : He's all manners. Most young irresponsibles are. His people, too, are undesirable. His father nearly let me down over an investment three years ago. If I'd taken his advice I should have lost money.

MRS. CHANTRY : Well, we haven't invited him to dinner since. Besides, it isn't a case of April marrying Jack.

MR. CHANTRY : April may fancy she's in love from sheer inexperience. I want her to see some really nice people.

MRS. CHANTRY : Yes, of course, but——

MR. CHANTRY : Will you allow me to speak at my own table? I propose that April shall come out this summer. I've been thinking over it for some time. She might do worse than marry Sir Algernon. We'll give a picnic on Gipsy Downs.

(ENTER APRIL *in dressing gown and slippers.*)

MRS. CHANTRY : April !

(MR. CHANTRY *stares sternly.*)

APRIL : Oh, for a cup of tea—quickly, quickly. (*Draws dressing-gown round her.*)

MRS. CHANTRY : (*Taking off saucer*) Here it is, though it's rather strong.

APRIL : I don't mind. (*Sits on tip of chair, buries her face in cup. Her hair falls over table*) Oh ! that's better. That's lots better. (*Jumps up and kisses her mother*) One more, mother darling, as strong as you like.

MRS. CHANTRY : (*Pouring out*) I'm not surprised you have no nerves.

(*APRIL skips over to MR. CHANTRY and flings her arms about his neck.*)

MR. CHANTRY : No, no, no ! I won't be kissed by a naughty girl who comes down late for breakfast, and even—— (*Pointing to dressing-gown*).

MRS. CHANTRY : In *déshabillé*.

MR. CHANTRY : In her dressing-gown.

APRIL : It's quite as nice as a frock, and *I* don't have to go off to business.

MR. CHANTRY : It's a good thing for you you don't. You couldn't go like that.

MRS. CHANTRY : You should try to be more punctual, April.

MR. CHANTRY : You set her a good example in punctuality, I must say, my dear. It doesn't matter whether it's Church or the theatre, you're always late, and I have to share the odium of disturbing people.

MRS. CHANTRY : Oh, John, John !

(*MR. CHANTRY growls incoherently.*)

APRIL : My pipe !

(APRIL seizes her pipe and blows it towards her father and mother. As she blows rainbow silks stream out.)

MR. CHANTRY: I admit I have had bad news this morning. Then that pig died hard, and a daughter of mine makes sport with times and customs——

(APRIL looks up slyly and laughs.)

MR. CHANTRY: You laugh. But by the time I get to the City I shall need all the philosophy on the office calendar for to-day. Marcus Aurelius will have his work cut out, you wicked sprite.

APRIL: When I'm your typist you'll be able to scold me all day long.

MR. CHANTRY: I hope I shall never waste so much breath.

MRS. CHANTRY: (To APRIL) Talking of breath reminds me of that song we heard the other night. (Beats time with her fingers and hums.)

MR. CHANTRY: A capital tune! (Hums) Tumpy, tumpy, tumpy.

MRS. CHANTRY: You haven't got it right though. It goes—— (Hums)

MR. CHANTRY: (Excitedly) That's it, that's it. (Hums with one finger up, and bobs up and down in chair) (Suddenly taking out watch) Oh! I shall miss my train.

(Makes a rush for the door, stops short, beats time——

(EXIT MR. CHANTRY on another bar.)

MRS. CHANTRY : (*Laughing merrily*) Before you came your father was all the other way. Wouldn't eat his bacon, and now he's left half his egg. That's talking to you. Though I don't think he's hungry.

APRIL : Why was he worried ?

MRS. CHANTRY : Some business letter. You know what men are about money matters. It's the one great mystery with them. I always say business men grow serious over money and flippant over women.

APRIL : It ought to be the other way about.

MRS. CHANTRY : Yes, of course ; that is, the right women.

APRIL : (*Scanning letter*) Yes, mother.

MRS. CHANTRY : Is that from Jack Wild ?

APRIL : (*Surprised and annoyed*) Yes.

MRS. CHANTRY : I don't think he's a bad sort of boy.

APRIL : Oh, Jack's all right. He amuses me immensely, he says such droll things.

MRS. CHANTRY : I think I understand Jack, but your father doesn't.

(*APRIL gives a little dissatisfied grunt and nibbles a piece of bread and butter without looking up.*)

You see, dear, it's a question of what other people may think and say.

APRIL : (*Looking up*) Has father been talking ?

MRS. CHANTRY : A little. He's worried about you.

APRIL : (*In bored tone*) Oh, dear old father, why can't he leave things alone? (*Pushing plate away*) What's he been saying now?

MRS. CHANTRY : He doesn't want you to see too much of Jack.

APRIL : Whenever father is worried at business he interferes at home.

MRS. CHANTRY : He says that Mr. Wild nearly landed him in some bad investment once.

APRIL : But I'm not going to run off with Jack's father. (*Tone rising in petulance*) I don't see what that has to do with it.

MRS. CHANTRY : Gently, my pet, that hasn't anything to do with it.

APRIL : Well? Well?

MRS. CHANTRY : Only he doesn't want you to be constantly seen about together.

APRIL : (*Scornfully*) What rot!

MRS. CHANTRY : He wants you to come out this summer and see some really nice people.

APRIL : Dear old father's nothing if not insulting.

MRS. CHANTRY : He spoke of a picnic on Gipsy Downs.

APRIL : And none of my friends will be invited, I suppose.

MRS. CHANTRY : Remember, you're our only child, It's not surprising your father should think you very precious.

APRIL : (*Whimpering*) It doesn't feel good to be precious ; it feels like a cage.

MRS. CHANTRY : You can do anything you wish within reason.

APRIL : (*Murmuring*) Within a cage.

MRS. CHANTRY : If you're really fond of Jack——

APRIL : (*Stamping and pushing her cup back*) Bother Jack. He's a boy, that's all. If father's going to worry about everything on two legs that isn't a woman, he'll take away my canary.

MRS. CHANTRY : You do exaggerate, dear. Your canary has never been called into question, though I wish sometimes it didn't sing so loudly.

(*MRS. CHANTRY rises and kisses APRIL, who wriggles without looking up. EXIT MRS. CHANTRY.*)

APRIL : Jack indeed !

(*She takes a forget-me-not out of vase and looks at it.*)

Forget me not. Ah ! my Dream-Face.

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE II

(Board room. Seated round table are six directors, CLAUD CARAPACE, MONTAGUE HARDACRE, TIMOTHY PUSHBY, MAURICE MORIBUND, EBENEZER TRICK-ALL, SIR ALGERNON LEGALLY and the SECRETARY, HORACE BARKER. The seat at the head of the table is vacant. Secretary has Minutes and Agenda by him. Directors are studying sheet of Agenda. There are blotting-pads, ink and pens. Opposite, hung up on the wall, is the trade mark, A Rock, and name "The Confidence Company.")

SECRETARY : The Chairman is late this morning. He must have missed his train.

CARAPACE : *(To SECRETARY)* When does the next train get up ?

PUSHBY : Oh, quite soon. It's a splendid line. There's a double service.

MORIBUND : *(In dull even tone)* Have you apprised the Chairman of the position of the Company ?

SECRETARY : He ought to have got my statement this morning. I had it posted yesterday afternoon.

MORIBUND : It means winding-up. I don't see any way out of it.

SECRETARY : Mr. Pushby thought it might be well to consult with ——— (*Looking over papers*)
What's his name?

PUSHBY : Merl Power.

SECRETARY : Oh, yes, Mr. Power, so I've asked him if he would meet the Board here this morning.

PUSHBY : He's a most extraordinary man. I should have thought him as mad as a march hatter, I mean march hare, that is, mad hatter, only he's promoted several companies that are now doing remarkably well.

LEGALLY : I've never heard his name.

TRICKALL : Nor I.

PUSHBY : We shan't commit——

(*Sound of humming.*)

SECRETARY : That's the Chairman.

(*ENTER CHANTRY dancing. SECRETARY rises.*)

SECRETARY : Good-morning, sir.

CHANTRY : Good-morning. (*To others*) Good-morning, gentlemen.

VOICES : Good-morning, Mr. Chairman.

(*SECRETARY takes hat and stick. CHANTRY hums and performs a half Morris Dance, waving his handkerchief. Board stare at one another. Some hold on to table, some scratch their heads.*)

CHANTRY : Lovely morning, gentlemen, beautiful day,
puts sunshine into the blood.

LEGALLY : I've heard it's a bad sign when you feel
so well. Too much pressure on the brain.

MORIBUND : (*To CHAIRMAN*) Did you get the state-
ment ?

(CHANTRY *nods smilingly, dancing still.*)

You know it means winding-up ?

HARDACRE : Have you considered the shareholders'
meeting ?

MORIBUND : It's no use addressing the Chairman.
He's—he's exalted this morning.

CHANTRY : A little dancing does no one any harm.

TRICKALL : Well, I'm fond of a good revue myself.

(*Knock.*)

SECRETARY : Come in.

(*ENTER FEMININE JUVENILE. Hands card to SECRETARY, staring. She stuffs handkerchief into her mouth, seeing CHANTRY gyrating.*)

CHANTRY : (*Stopping short, to SECRETARY*) Yes ?

SECRETARY : Mr. Merl Power, sir. Mr. Pushby
thought he might be of use to us.

CHANTRY : Power ? Power ? Who is he ?

PUSHBY : He's the sensational Company promoter.
Cleared several firms in a very foggy condition.

CHANTRY: We haven't discussed our position yet.
(Quickly) Never mind. *(To SECRETARY)* Have him shown in.

(SECRETARY nods to JUVENILE. EXIT JUVENILE.)

CARAPACE: Any port in a storm.

CHANTRY: *(Mopping forehead)* I'm in a lovely perspiration. You should dance, Pushby. I should like to see every London terminus disgorging its morning passengers dancing. *(Takes seat.)*

(ENTER POWER. He looks like the early portrait of Dickens, and wears Spanish cloak.)

POWER: *(Bowling)* Good-day, gentlemen.

VOICES: Good-morning.

(SECRETARY places chair.)

CHANTRY: Well, Mr. Power, perhaps Mr. Pushby has explained our position to you. *(To SECRETARY)* Show him the Statement.

POWER: *(Glancing at it)* Yes, I think I understand the situation.

CHANTRY: You do. That's good. Have you any proposition to make to us?

POWER: The cause of your present embarrassment is by no means unique. Quite the reverse. Other firms in similar trouble are now flourishing that have adopted my methods of business. I will do for you what I have done for them.

CHANTRY : On what condition ?

POWER : That I become the acting Chairman of your Company, taking up the necessary shares. If I am successful I leave it to the Company to reimburse me.

CARAPACE : And what are your methods ?

POWER : I warn you you will have to scrap all former ideas as to the right conduct of business.

CHANTRY : We'll begin then by hearing the general principles you propose to lay down.

POWER : Very well.

CARAPACE : What in your opinion is the cause of our present embarrassment ?

POWER : There are many causes. You have not called up your capital.

SECRETARY : (*Hastily turning over papers and speaking in loud voice*) Excuse me, but——

CHANTRY : (*Raising hand*) Just a moment. We'll hear all that Mr. Power has to tell us first.

POWER : Capital is vitality. Conversely, vitality is capital. Has that vitality been called up ?

CHANTRY : You must be quite explicit with us.

POWER : I mean, sir, the business has not enough good will to carry it.

CARAPACE : Oh, now we understand you, but we can prove——

POWER: You're trading at fifty per cent. under the human standard of joy.

MORIBUND: I beg your pardon.

LEGALLY: Our employees speak most well of us.

POWER: How shall I put it? You're fair—but—not fairy.

(Dead silence.)

Now, in these days if you want your Company to be a going concern you've got to make it a fairy concern.

(SECRETARY explodes.)

MORIBUND: Really, I think we're wasting Mr. Power's time!

POWER: *(Rising)* Good-day, gentlemen.

CHANTRY: Please sit down. I'm sure the Board will give all you care to say the most studied attention.

(POWER resumes seat.)

I think you must explain your terminology. Our difference is probably verbal, not vital. When you say—um!—fairy I take it you mean a little brightness, lightness. Well, our staff have an annual beanfeast, and thoroughly they enjoy themselves too. Once a year we all turn out—directors and all.

POWER: It's not enough. Every day must be a beanfeast.

TRICKALL : (*Who stammers*) But, but, but my dear sir, where will the work come in ?

POWER : There musn't be any work.

CHANTRY : (*Leaning back and laughing*) There, Trickall ! what do you say to that ?

POWER : I mean the whole thing must be pure joy—that is, if you want to pay your Ordinary Shareholders.

CARAPACE : Oh, that's sheer Ruskin.

HARDACRE : Cynical syndicalism.

TRICKALL : B-b-b-bolshevism !

CARAPACE : (*Confidentially to HARDACRE*) My wife reads Ruskin to me when she's riled.

POWER : You abolish the need for play by happy activity. I warned you you'd have to scrap old ideas. I'm giving this company laws that were in force before the Companies' Act of 1868, though they have been evaded.

TRICKALL : (*Breathlessly*) Well, what next ?

POWER : There's the law of money. Money circulates. Inflow is regulated by outflow.

PUSHBY : You mean outflow is regulated by inflow.

POWER : Unless it flows out it can't flow in. Selfish expenditure is no expenditure at all. There's no circulation.

CHANTRY : Instead of free trade, fair trade,

POWER : No, sir, fairy trade. Ethics are not enough.

MORIBUND : Not enough to turn ourselves into a charity !

POWER : How can I make myself plain ? Enchantment ! That's the word. All of you, gentlemen, and your staff will have to be enchanted.

(Board look at one another and try to smile.)

CHANTRY : *(Leaning forward politely)* You said enchanted.

POWER : *(Sternly)* Enchanted.

CHANTRY : As I thought.

PUSHBY : Of course, when you say enchanted you mean——

POWER : Just enchanted. Nothing more or less.

CHANTRY : *(In soft voice)* How ? We should like to know.

SECRETARY : *(Animatedly)* That's it ! How ? It seems all theory to me. These things look all right on paper, but they don't work out.

MORIBUND : *(Furiously)* Theory ? Pure Bunkum ! Gentlemen, this will never do. A practical joke is being played upon us. We shall be quoted as laughing stock on the Exchange.

POWER : At a premium.

MORIBUND : We shall be a by-word in the City. It will be the last straw,

TRICKALL : (*Shaking his fist at POWER*) You won't enchant *me*, sir, don't you think it. (*Rising up*) You can't intimidate me.

MORIBUND : Sit down, Trickall.

CARAPACE : (*Fiercely to POWER*) What do you mean, sir, by coming here and talking to us as if—as if we're mad.

POWER : (*Smartly slapping the uncovered wooden side of table and speaking with great animation for the first time. Board jump*) You've said it! You've said it.

CARAPACE : (*Taken aback and trying to be fierce*) Said what?

POWER : Mad.

CARAPACE : Well? Suppose I have.

POWER : You have.

CARAPACE : (*Weakly defiant*) I know I have. What happens now?

POWER : What happens? Why, everything happens. You've uttered it at last.

MORIBUND : That doesn't commit us to anything.

POWER : (*To CARAPACE*) My dear sir, I congratulate you. You've stumbled on a word of power.

TRICKALL : Mad's mad. You can't get anything out of that.

POWER : I can get everything out of it. When all has been said and done it's the only hope of humanity. The world's greatest have been the maddest. Read Plato, read Oliver Cromwell, read Joan of Arc. In their mightiest moments they have attained madness. Gentlemen, I beseech you pray to be saved from sanity, and above all English sanity.

HARDACRE : It's common sense that's made England what she is.

POWER : You're right. And it's uncommonsense that shall make her what she is to be. She's nearly served her sentence of commonsense.

TRICKALL : If I can get out of this room as I came in I shall never cease to be thankful.

CHANTRY : My co-directors who have done me the honour to elect me as their chairman have always regarded me as a practical man. As one business man to another I ask you, does this translate itself into practical trading ?

POWER : It's the only way. Commerce is dying through loss of enchantment. Why do you need a pick-me-up five, seven, ten times a day ? Because the very means of life is killing you. Your journey to the office in the morning should be the adventure of youth ; presage and wonder surround you as you sit down at your desk ; the telephone call, the call of the wild ; your traveller a gentleman divine ; each moment a threshold ; the next step always into fairyland.

(There is a motionless silence.)

CHANTRY : (*In a slow, subdued voice*) And it means a profit ?

(POWER bows his head.)

Gentlemen, what do you say ? We have to decide.

TRICKALL : I'm opposed to it *in toto*.

CHANTRY : Not if it works out on the right side of the P. and L. account ?

(*Pause.*)

PUSHBY : I suggest, Mr. Chairman, that a committee of the Board be appointed to consider the matter.

CHANTRY : Those in favour ?

(PUSHBY, LEGALLY, and CARAPACE hold up their hands.)

My own vote gives a majority of one.

HARDACRE : We don't want to be rushed into enchantment. If we are going mad the thing must be done decently.

CHANTRY : I'm entirely with Mr. Hardacre there.

CHANTRY : Now, Mr. Power, tell us in a nutshell what the Committee have to consider. (*To SECRETARY*) Take this down.

POWER : I. That the firm form itself into a Freemasonry Trading Company, Unlimited, for the welfare of the community.

CHANTRY : (*To SECRETARY*) Write that down.

POWER : 2. That all work shall be the spontaneous overflow of joy.

CHANTRY : (*Clearing his throat*) Write it down.

POWER : 3. The sole form of advertisement to be a poster of the naked Truth.

CHANTRY : (*To SECRETARY*) Go on, get it down.

LEGALLY : (*Raising his hand*) Mr. Power ! Mr. Chairman !

POWER : (*Quietly, addressing CHANTRY*) Am I to continue ?

CHANTRY : Please. (*Looking at LEGALLY*) We can discuss detail afterwards. (*To SECRETARY*) Got that down ?

SECRETARY : (*Nods*) The sole form of advertisement to be a poster of——

CHANTRY : Yes, yes, yes.

POWER : In order to attain, maintain and communicate the natural standard of human joy each member of the Board shall submit himself annually for re-enchantment, the mark of such enchantment to be madness. Finally, the acting chairmanship to be taken by myself for one calendar year, under financial provisions aforementioned. (CHANTRY *mops forehead.*)

SECRETARY : (*Writing*) Financial provisions aforementioned.

CHANTRY : Now read that out to the Board.

SECRETARY : At the 7th Extraordinary General Meeting of the Company it was decided to appoint a Committee to consider the following :—

MORIBUND : Oh, we can't hear it again !

(SECRETARY *looks up with pursed mouth.*)

CHANTRY : Very well. It doesn't sound unreasonable, gentlemen.

SECRETARY : It will mean new Articles of Association.

PUSHBY : I've only one criticism——

(*Looks round.*)

——we've got actually to try the scheme to judge it.

HARDACRE : Since the Chairman's so enthusiastic I will waive my opposition to the experiment. You'll have to explain matters at the Shareholders' Meeting, Mr. Chairman. You'll have to put it to them in a very large light.

CHANTRY : I shall not blind them with a vision of the Truth. I shall speak with the usual discretion required in handling entrusted money.

PUSHBY : (*To POWER*) You tell us the thing's been done ?

POWER : Yes, in the States.

CHANTRY : Oh ! not in England ?

POWER : The sun rises in England before America, but it's usually cloudy,

TRICKALL : If I'm not too curious, how are we to be enchanted ?

CHANTRY : Yes, that's a point.

POWER : It's not a Jack-in-the-box affair. As you endeavour to put your intentions into practice you'll gradually go supremely mad. But I'll see you're helped.

TRICKALL : (*Humbly*) Thank you.

(*A blossom blows down on to CHANTRY.*)

CHANTRY : (*Excitedly*) I've a splendid idea, gentlemen. I am about to give a soirée for my daughter's coming out. I propose we make this our first beanfeast under the new Articles of Association. It can be held on Midsummer's night.

HARDACRE : I would——

POWER : An excellent idea.

CHANTRY : Yes, it just flashed into my mind. I beg your pardon, Hardacre.

HARDACRE : I submit that the Board rescind the word "bean"——

CHANTRY : Quite so. I think we're agreed it would lower the tone. I never liked the word. (*To SECRETARY*) Strike out "bean."

LEGALLY : (*Stroking the back of his head and giving little laugh*) You know, I still think, Mr. Chairman, that you have more innate genius for this than we have. (*To the Board*) You remember how the Chairman danced-in this morning ?

POWER : The Chairman danced this morning ?

LEGALLY : Oh, rather ! As naturally as you please.
Waving his handkerchief about.

POWER : He waved his handkerchief ?

TRICKALL : I should think he did. He gave me a nasty
turn, I can tell you.

POWER : (*Looking from underneath eyebrows*) Some
of you may know what that waving means.

CHANTRY : A little lightheartedness. I danced to
amuse my young daughter, and then continued,
I found it so invigorating.

POWER : This is more interesting still. Your daughter
inspired you to dance like that ?

CHANTRY : Yes. She's as wild as a wave herself.

POWER : (*Solemnly*) She is one of the number.

CHANTRY : You must meet her on the twenty-fourth,
though she's quite a child.

POWER : (*Solemnly*) I must indeed. (*Looks at
watch*). Excuse me, I have to be in Cambridge
to-night.

VOICES : Cambridge ?

POWER : Yes, I'm going to get the Universities to
endow a chair of Wisdom ; there are only seats
of learning at present.

CHANTRY : Not being Solomon, I can't follow you,
sir.

POWER: No matter. Every Don must be a Quixote, that's the idea. Good-day, gentlemen.

VOICES: Good-morning, good-morning.

(Board rises. SECRETARY holds door open. EXIT POWER. Board resumes seats.)

CHANTRY: *(Glancing around)* Well? We've done it.

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE I

(Long alleys of pine and fern are depicted on both sides as a vista. Opposite are gnarled oaks with broken branches that suggest distorted giants. Their roots are partly covered with moss and fern. The stage is a fairy circle of smooth fresh green grass ; —a kind of hall to which the avenues leads on either side. Moonlight. Throughout the scene Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs and Spades flit through the trees.)

ENTER a band of men in peaked caps and cloaks carrying musical instruments.)

LEADER: This is the spot they meet at. We will practise in the wood till they come.

(EXEUNT. Sound of tuning-up. Music begins. A troop of fairies dance and frolic round green hand in hand. Music stops, and they vanish.)

(ENTER PRINCE OF HEARTS and PRINCE OF DIAMONDS.)

PRINCE OF HEARTS: Oh, lovers, lovers, your uncharitable act long ago may work you woe.

PRINCE OF DIAMONDS: The poor soul they had such little pity for will hate them instinctively.

PRINCE OF HEARTS: The beggar woman who is now the gipsy.

PRINCE OF DIAMONDS : Yes.

PRINCE OF HEARTS : They loved only one another.

PRINCE OF DIAMONDS : The pain of the past has given their enemy a powerful personality.

PRINCE OF HEARTS : As long as they can keep the Face of Remembrance they need not fear.

PRINCE OF DIAMONDS : Try to melt the gipsy's heart.

PRINCE OF HEARTS : It will be difficult work.

PRINCE OF DIAMONDS : (*As they walk off*) This is what I propose.

(EXEUNT PRINCES OF HEARTS *and* DIAMONDS.

ENTER PRINCE OF SPADES *and* MAID OF HONOUR.

EXEUNT. ENTER PRINCE OF CLUBS *and* MAID OF HONOUR.)

PRINCE OF CLUBS : To-night we have our great opportunity.

MAID OF HONOUR : It will be easy work confounding these merry money-makers, *and* pleasant.

PRINCE OF CLUBS : They're only devils' play. Our serious business is to separate the lovers. They are twin souls.

MAID OF HONOUR : What is your plan ?

PRINCE OF CLUBS : To betray the man as a man is betrayed.

MAID OF HONOUR : That is——

PRINCE OF CLUBS : Through love of power.

MAID OF HONOUR : And you will trip up the woman——

PRINCE OF CLUBS : Through her vanity. It's really the same. We can do this without our rivals.

MAID OF HONOUR : They are coming. We shall be overheard.

(EXEUNT. *A few bars of music.* ENTER PRINCE OF SPADES *with two* MAIDS OF HONOUR.)

PRINCE OF SPADES : Stay. You know the idea ?

(*Others nod.*)

FIRST MAID : (*To PRINCE*) Why not use the poison just added to our pharmacopoeia ? The one extracted from war atrocities.

SECOND MAID : The old is surest in its action. We can't beat jealousy.

PRINCE : Our work is to prevent the lovers from meeting, and to make the gipsy mislead them.

(EXEUNT. *Country jig.* ENTER CARAPACE, *he jigs round.* ENTER LEGALLY *behind.*)

LEGALLY : What *are* you doing, Carapace ?

CARAPACE : I'm trying to become enchanted. It's hot work. (*Poises on one foot*) I feel I could stride a moonbeam.

LEGALLY : Why should we have to make monkeys of ourselves ?

CARAPACE : I beg your pardon.

(ENTER HARDACRE *dancing. An ox-like man. He stops dancing.*)

HARDACRE : Fine night. Brilliant moon. A wonderful night for witchery, gentlemen.

CARAPACE : Rather !

HARDACRE : How are you ?

CARAPACE : Fair. I've got a touch of Bacchanalianism flying about me.

HARDACRE : I feel demi-semi-Druidic. And how's Sir Algernon ?

LEGALLY : Middling mad. What would they think of us if we did this on the Exchange ?

(ENTER PUSHBY, *overhearing* LEGALLY. *Taps LEGALLY on shoulder.*)

PUSHBY : Eye of a needle, Sir Algernon, eye of a needle.

CARAPACE : (*Blowing*) I wish results would come quicker.

(ENTER TRICKALL.)

HARDACRE : You can't go mad in a moment. You're

too impatient. Besides, when you are, will you know it?

TRICKALL: What an uncomfortable idea!

PUSHBY: (*To HARDACRE*) You mean to say we've passed the Rubicon without knowing it?

HARDACRE: Exactly. When a man's had a glass or two he doesn't say to himself, I'm——

PUSHBY: No, no. Of course not.

HARDACRE: *That's* always a stage in front——

LEGALLY: I think you're unduly optimistic, Hardacre. Here am I in the middle of a wood, mid-summer night, full moon, and as cool as a sea cucumber. No afflatus. No afflatus whatever.

CARAPACE: (*Trying to pirouette*) You haven't danced.

LEGALLY: On the contrary, I've been practising in my bedroom all the afternoon like Demosthenes preparing his speeches. What the servants thought I fear to think.

(ENTER CHANTRY, MORIBUND, and BARKER dancing.)

PUSHBY *and* CARAPACE: Hurrah!

CHANTRY: It's rejuvenating. Perfectly rejuvenating. I've been telling Moribund and Barker you have to put your soul into your sole.

CARAPACE: That's what I've been trying to do. See here. (*Gives a clumsy turn.*)

LEGALLY: (*To CHANTRY*) I wish I had your enthusiasm.

CHANTRY: I'm not so presumptuous as to say I've transcended reason yet. Oh no!

TRICKALL: I believe one has to be born to it.

BARKER: So do I, sir. These things are all right on paper. But directly you try to put them into practice you find the theory won't work out.

PUSHBY: Come, Barker, you must try to throw off the cynicism of Surbiton now you're here.

BARKER: I've been doing the exercises. I told my wife they're for a cure. I didn't say what. You know how suspicious women are.

(ENTER POWER.)

POWER: Good-evening, gentlemen.

VOICES: Good-evening.

POWER: (*With sweep of hand*) The night favours us.

HARDACRE: (*Clearing his throat*) Diana's looking very fine to-night.

POWER: And how are you all getting on with your steps?

CHANTRY: I don't say I've got every step right, but the rhythmic reaction of turning round three times—ah!

LEGALLY: (*Fixing his monocle and stroking back of his head*) With me it's the opposite. I can memorize all the steps, but I don't get satisfaction.

POWER: Persevere, Sir Algernon. My advice is keep turning. (*To others*) What about you, gentlemen?

CARAPACE: (*Poking him pleasantly*) Watch me. (*He performs like a lively goat*). Remember, I've turned fifty.

POWER: That's the spirit. In that spirit men have attained fine frenzy.

MORIBUND: I know I'm a Philistine, but it seems *very* farcical. We should keep a balanced mind.

POWER: Just so, Mr. Moribund. But most people are glued, not balanced. These dances will help to loosen the mind, then you can balance it.

MORIBUND: I can't say it struck me like that before.

POWER: (*Oscillating hand*) To be unhinged is to lack free swing. Man began wild, and he's got to go wild again; win back his elemental life. Nature's wild, life's wild, love's wild.

CARAPACE: (*To HARDACRE*) You hear? Nature's wild, life's wild, love's——

HARDACRE: Yes, yes, I hear. (*Music begins.*)

POWER: Good! The band's arrived. You're fortunate in getting the mad musicians of Letchworth.

TRICKALL: I thought it was fairy music?

POWER: It is practically. They haven't a conventional idea in their heads. Now, please.

(*They dance. CHANTRY with abandon, CARAPACE like a gamesome goat; HARDACRE like an automa-*

ton, LEGALLY *superciliously*, TRICKALL *goutily*,
BARKER *conscientiously*.)

POWER : (*Encouragingly*) Right, left, honour your partner. More abandon, Sir Algernon. Don't look as if you'd come from a funeral with a flea in your ear. Good! Very good! The chairman's great. (*To LEGALLY*) You must forget yourself. All depends on that.

CHANTRY : Sir Algernon will be as mad as a March hare directly.

LEGALLY : I want to be the proper thing, of course.

POWER : You can't tell your progress. Frequently people think themselves perfectly normal when others see them quite differently.

BARKER : I feel so silly.

POWER : Try to think you're Pan, Mr. Barker.

CHANTRY : My wife and daughter are motoring here and bringing some refreshment.

(POWER'S *manner changes. He looks abstracted and takes CHANTRY apart.*)

POWER : When do you expect Mrs. Chantry and your daughter?

CHANTRY : Any moment.

POWER : They may get lost on such a night. I must light a beacon, though it may be too late. Excuse me.

(EXIT POWER.)

CHANTRY : Let's practise that again.

(They dance. Sound of motor. Dancers stop. Music stops. ENTER MRS. CHANTRY and APRIL.)

CHANTRY: That's my wife. Well, my pet, kiss enchanted hubby.

MRS. CHANTRY: Are we late? We couldn't find the way. April asked a man, such a funny man; he didn't look like a man. I think he misled us—anyway, we're here at last.

CHANTRY: That's the chief thing. Now you all know one another.

(MRS. CHANTRY shakes hands and says, "How do you do" to DIRECTORS—APRIL follows.)

LEGALLY: *(To MRS. CHANTRY)* How your daughter's shot up since last I saw her. Quite a fine woman.

MRS. CHANTRY: Oh, she's a sheer child.

LEGALLY: Sheer enchantment. *(To APRIL)* Miss Chantry, I'm sure you could make me mad. Will you try?

(No answer.)

Will you give me a private tuition through the trees yonder?

(No answer.)

MRS. CHANTRY: That's just like her. One minute here, the next miles away. April, Sir Algernon's speaking to you.

APRIL: *(Starting)* I beg your pardon. I am so sorry.

LEGALLY: There is no need to be sorry. Shall we take a stroll together? We may see—er—fairies.

MRS. CHANTRY: April would love it. She believes in

fairies. Personally I've no use for such tricky creatures. I'd rather have a good parrot.

APRIL : (*To LEGALLY*) Yes, let us go, I want to look for something or someone.

(EXEUNT APRIL *and* LEGALLY.)

ENTER POWER.)

CHANTRY : My daughter's gone wandering off with Sir Algernon.

POWER : (*Quickly*) Gone ?

CHANTRY : Not far. A few steps.

POWER : (*Abstractedly*) Which way did she go ?

CHANTRY : Oh, pray do not leave us again. Allow me to introduce you to my wife.

POWER : (*Pulling himself together*) I beg your pardon.
(*Bows to MRS. CHANTRY*) Good evening. (*They shake hands.*)

CHANTRY : Will you not initiate us further ?

POWER : Yes, I want you to take the second degree.

TRICKALL : (*Doubtfully*) Oh ! (*Looking round*). These woods are weird places at night.

POWER : Very. But to proceed. The idea is this, gentlemen. Walking's imperfect dancing ; talking's imperfect singing. The dance is our true motion ; song the natural voice.

TRICKALL : But life will become an endless recitative. Am I to sing (*in sing-song*) It is clouding over now, my mackintosh I think I'll take ?

POWER : (*Coolly*) People will learn to talk less. That will be one of the first advantages.

CARAPACE : I shan't dare to open my mouth.

(*Shakes his head at HARDACRE.*)

POWER : It's only the lumber of mere talk that's prose. Truth is always musical.

MORIBUND : (*Quietly*) Home truth ?

POWER : These things commence, of course, as polite accomplishments. You begin by giving your remarks a rhythm. Later on everything you say will have to rhyme.

PUSHBY : Só when Mr. Hardacre wants to contradict me at the next Board Meeting he'll have to turn Spring poet.

HARDACRE : I say, Power, this is a bit too thick.

POWER : Gentlemen, practice is the falling drop. If you wish to impress a single idea you use a song. For a miscellany of facts the ballad. You can pack a lot of information into the ballad.

BARKER : It will hamper business.

MORIBUND : (*Speaking slowly*) What's the extreme penalty for swearing ?

POWER : You must cover it instantly with a rhyme.

(*CARAPACE begins scribbling on cuff.*)

CHANTRY : What are you doing, Carapace ?

CARAPACE : I'm making a list of emergency rhymes.

CHANTRY : (*To POWER*) You will give us a lead, Mr. Power ?

POWER : The simpler the better. For instance, suppose you require a pair of bootlaces you go into a bootshop and adapt some charming little nursery rhyme, say—Nuts in May ; anything you like. (*Sings*)

What is the price of laces, pray ?
Sixpence, eh ? O shame, I say ;
Retain them to the Judgment Day—
And you bid a cold good-morning.

See ? Trenchant, yet polite.

TRICKALL : Oh, I daresay you can rhyme to a shop wench, but suppose I decide to start my summer vests, what am I to say to my man-servant ? I should be bowled over at once.

POWER : Nothing of the kind. You would commence with the Old English line—

Summer is a-coming in,
William, hark you.
I'll begin
My Jaegers thin,
So air them well, mark you,
William, hark you.

CARAPACE : I catch the idea.

POWER : Of course, you catch it. Now suppose you're waiting to catch your usual train. You don't foam at the mouth because you're delayed. You simply burst into song—

What's happened to the 8.15 ?
Porter, can you hear me well ?
I thought you couldn't—what d'you mean ?

It won't be running of a morning?
 Taken off without any warning?
 I thank you, Porter, for I dwell
 In realms above these changes fell.

A little rhyme like that; a mere nothing—no straining for effect, commands attention at once, and bevels the edges of life with beauty.

CHANTRY: (*Ruminating*) That's rather telling.

PUSHBY: (*Enthusiastic*) It's fascinating, but difficult.

POWER: It's a knack.

CARAPACE: (*Bursting forth*) It's wildly beautiful. I feel the thing now. Gentlemen, I've got the afflatus. (*Begins*) Oh, . . .

CHANTRY: (*Excitedly*) Let us all try, let us all try.

(*With the exception of POWER all begin singing at once in different strains. Some wave their arms, some stop their ears. Amid the babel ENTER LEGALLY—they stop suddenly.*)

LEGALLY: (*Gravely to MR. and MRS. CHANTRY*) I've lost your daughter.

MR. and MRS. CHANTRY: Lost?

MRS. CHANTRY: April! April!

(*They all give chase, headed by MR. and MRS. CHANTRY. EXEUNT*

POWER slowly takes another direction

ENTER HANDSOME GIPSY WOMAN. *She beckons.*
 ENTER APRIL.)

GIPSY : (*Imperiously*) Sit down here, child. I can tell you things.

APRIL : Can you ? What things ?

GIPSY : Things about the future.

APRIL : Oh, do tell me.

GIPSY : You want to know something about some one ?

APRIL : Yes. How clever of you to guess. Do you think I shall find——

GIPSY : Him ?

APRIL : Yes.

GIPSY : Give me something to hold.

APRIL : (*Moving her hands hesitatingly*) What ?

GIPSY : What you wear near your heart.

APRIL : You can't see that.

GIPSY : Quite easily.

APRIL : (*Unfastening*) You'll be very careful. (*Hands Face of Remembrance to GIPSY.*)

GIPSY : (*Putting locket to forehead, mutters, then speaks aloud*) He's rich.

APRIL : Is he my dream-face ?

GIPSY : He's been making love to you already, to-night.

APRIL : Oh, he's not *the* someone.

GIPSY : He's in love with you, and he's very very rich.

APRIL : I don't like rich people ; they aren't nice.

GIPSY : Don't you like lovely dresses, a beautiful home, every man wishing he could marry you ?

APRIL : It's nice to be loved.

GIPSY : Of course. And a beautiful home's nice.

APRIL : Yes.

GIPSY : Then you must marry this gentleman.

APRIL : I don't know that I could love him. I've never dreamt him.

GIPSY : Girls who wait for their dreams usually die dreaming. You don't want to do that.

APRIL : No.

GIPSY : Then take a Gipsy's advice. Gipsies can see.

APRIL : I suppose it's no good trusting dreams.

(Feels for money.)

GIPSY : I don't want any money. Here's a charm you can wear.

APRIL : A charm ? How exciting ! What will it do ?

GIPSY : Try it. It will bring you Gipsy-luck. *(Puts it round her neck.)*

APRIL : Oh, but my locket——

(ENTER LEGALLY.)

GIPSY : Look ! There is your lover.

(GIPSY conceals herself.)

LEGALLY : There you are, Miss Chantry. Where did you go to ?

APRIL : I missed you suddenly. I thought you left me. Why, where's she gone to ?

LEGALLY : Who ? I shall begin to think this wood is really bewitched.

(EXEUNT LEGALLY AND APRIL.

ENTER POWER *opposite*. GIPSY *reappears*.)

POWER : (*Catching sight of GIPSY*) Have you seen a lady wandering alone ?

GIPSY : Young ?

POWER : (*Quickly*) Yes.

GIPSY : I think I can help you.

POWER : (*Impatiently*) Which way did she go ?

GIPSY : Give me something to hold.

POWER : I can't stay for fortune-telling.

GIPSY : You want to find the lady.

POWER : I do.

GIPSY : Then give me that locket.

POWER : Good Heavens ! You can see that ?

GIPSY : Seeing's easy when your eyes are open ?

POWER : (*Handing locket*) You've been clever enough to see it, you shall hold it.

GIPSY : (*Putting locket to forehead*) You have great powers.

POWER : (*Ironically*) Thank you.

GIPSY : And you know it. But you won't succeed as you are now.

POWER : Am I not succeeding ?

GIPSY : You're wasting your powers on people who don't appreciate you.

POWER : I manage to help them.

GIPSY : Help yourself first. You may be able to help them more.

POWER : What should I do ?

GIPSY : Make a name. You can by your gifts.

POWER : How ?

GIPSY : You need a woman to help you.

POWER : I don't need *a* woman, I need *the* woman.

GIPSY : Will you know her when you see her ?

POWER : Surely.

GIPSY : Don't people spend their lives looking for the thing at their elbow ?

POWER : Unriddle your meaning.

GIPSY : She is here now.

POWER : (*Looking round*) Where ?

GIPSY : (*Authoritatively*) It is me you need. *I* can make you famous.

(*There is a pause. He is about to speak.*)

I am the Lady of Fortune. I can reshuffle the cards and bring you Kings and Queens.

POWER : And the price ? My blood ? my soul ?

GIPSY : What should I want with your blood and your soul ? You become one of us, that's all.

POWER : Do I go through a mysterious ceremony ?

GIPSY : You walk further into the Hall of Many Mirrors.

POWER : What do I see ?

GIPSY : Yourself. Elongated with melancholy ; doubled up with mirth ; swollen with importance ; back, front, sideways, threatening yourself, dancing before yourself, playing the villain, playing the fool, till you stop short and discover it's yourself.

POWER : What a strange Initiation !

GIPSY : Won't you dare to try ?

POWER : But your spells and charms are no use to me. I trust to the alchemy of Truth.

GIPSY : Truth is impersonal. Gipsy-glamour bestows power on you.

POWER : (*With short laugh*) Life's adventure. I'll have a gamble at the game.

GIPSY : (*Putting trinket round neck*) 'Tis done. This trinket marks you as one of us. Come.

(*He follows her into the wood. There is a sound of hollow laughter and a long low wail.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE II

(*Twenty years later. A turn in a maze. ENTER APRIL. She looks dishevelled and bewildered, and casts herself down exhausted.*)

APRIL: And this is what people call pleasure! Wandering through the same places over and over and over again.

(*ENTER GIPSY, looking young, handsome, fresh.*)

GIPSY: That's what they come here for. When they tire of the fun they manage to find the way out.

APRIL: I wish I could. It's no fun to me.

GIPSY: Then you will find your way out very soon if you don't sit down and despair.

APRIL: *You* brought me into this.

GIPSY: You wouldn't have come had you known all about it?

APRIL: No, of course not. I didn't know any better.

GIPSY: Now you do, so don't be ungrateful. You really entered the maze on that midsummer night twenty years ago.

APRIL : I haven't been wandering here for twenty years !

GIPSY : You were married in the maze. Your husband died in the maze. Your child was born and died in the maze.

APRIL : Your words are always a maze.

GIPSY : One maze surrounds another. The City is a maze surrounding this. And there is a greater maze surrounding the City.

APRIL : It was this horrid charm that deceived me.

(Tears it from her neck and flings it into the dust.)

GIPSY : You were in a dream when you took it.

APRIL : I must have been.

GIPSY : You might have been still if you hadn't fancied it.

APRIL : Yes, a happy dream.

GIPSY : Just a happy dream.

APRIL : *(Starting)* Where is my dream-face, my locket ?

GIPSY : *(Handing it)* Here it is. Waiting for you to ask for it.

APRIL : *(Putting it on fondly)* My Face of Remembrance. *(Looks up brightly)* And now, how do I get out ?

GIPSY : By taking the right turn each time.

(APRIL, *who has risen up, takes the right bend.*
GIPSY *gives a low laugh.*)

That finishes my work with her.

(ENTER *a crowd of men and girls laughing and jostling each other.*)

A GIRL : Which way now ?

A MAN : Any way.

(*Some take one turn, some another.* ENTER POWER.)

POWER : (*To GIPSY*) Oh, there you are.

GIPSY : Yes, seeing that everyone has the fun of the fair.

POWER : The pathetic holiday crowd.

GIPSY : What, another one tired of it ?

POWER : You think because you're a wandering tribe that everyone enjoys meandering.

GIPSY : So they do. Every little rill of water does.

POWER : The rill finds the sea. I'll be a Gipsy no longer.

GIPSY : Tired of reputation ? Tired of success ?

POWER : I'm weary of the roundness of the world. Who wouldn't be tired of walking in a cage ?

GIPSY : A cage ? The fair ? It's capital fun for a time, shieing at success, whirly-gigging up and down and round and round. Folk love the giddiness of

the whirly-gig. And we never blow the whistle till they're tired of the tunes.

POWER : You turn simple heads.

GIPSY : The more giddy they become the more they like it.

POWER : Of course. Life's hypnotism.

GIPSY : The newest name for the oldest thing. Life is a sleep.

POWER : (*Tearing trinket from neck*) And you've caught me with this cursed sorcery.

GIPSY : That's a better word. It blames me, it blames the world, it never blames you, remember.

POWER : Remember ! I demand my—my—(*Looks about him*) Face of Remembrance.

GIPSY : (*Handing it*). Waiting for you.

(POWER *seizes it and puts it on.*)

POWER : No more round and round. Which is the way ?

GIPSY : The right-hand turn.

POWER : Good.

(EXIT POWER. ENTER CROWD *as before*. EXEUNT *with* GIPSY. ENTER APRIL.)

APRIL : Why, I must have forgotten to keep to the right.

(ENTER POWER *from opposite side.*)

POWER: I've been sleep-walking again. (*To APRIL*)
One can have too much of this sort of thing.

APRIL: Yes, indeed. I wish I could get out.

POWER: The same here.

APRIL: I think one forgets to turn to the right
always.

POWER: May I join you? We can remind each
other.

APRIL: Oh, please do. I'm almost despairing.

POWER: It will make it much easier and far nicer for
me.

APRIL: Haven't we passed each other before?

POWER: I think we must have. (*Slowly*) I seem
to——

APRIL: (*With a laugh*) So do I.

POWER: We must have kept on meeting.

(They study one another's faces.)

APRIL: You're like a forgotten name.

POWER: You're like—yourself, a lovely lady.

APRIL: (*Turning away quickly*) We musn't forget
the way.

POWER: No. We must find that first. It almost seems
to me as if it was an appointment.

APRIL: I know what you mean, though I can't ex-
plain it.

POWER : (*Moving off*) We may remember things and things as we walk along.

APRIL : We turn to the right, don't we? Always to the right.

(SCENE BLACKENED)

ACT IV

SCENE I

(Phoenix Hall, Glastonbury, decorated in blue and gold.)

DISCOVERED MR. *and* MRS. CHANTRY, CARAPACE, HARDACRE, PUSHBY, TRICKALL *and* BARKER, *in regalia*. ANDREW *arranging palms that are sup-₁posed to screen orchestra.*)

CHANTRY: *(To HARDACRE)* Exactly twenty years ago to-day, Hardacre, we started the Freemasons' Trading Guild.

HARDACRE: It's truly fraternal of you and Mrs. Chantry to celebrate the event in this generous and festal spirit.

VOICES: Indeed, indeed.

(CHANTRY gives a self-deprecatory gesture.)

CARAPACE: Since the War ended life's been a perfect Kaleidoscope.

TRICKALL: Or transformation scene at the end of a play.

CHANTRY: We danced away our old ideas that summer night after all.

CARAPACE : It was the best thing we ever did.

HARDACRE : Aye.

PUSHBY : Indeed.

TRICKALL : Agreed.

BARKER : Hear, hear.

CHANTRY : Our introduction of dancing into commerce, of music into the market-place has rejuvenated England. It has given it a new *spirit*, gentlemen, a thing that all the laws of the land couldn't do.

CARAPACE : You can't cheat a man on 'Change while the band's playing the "Sonata Pathetique."

PUSHBY : That's true.

HARDACRE : It goes against the grain, I know. I've given it up.

CHANTRY : (*Looking round with righteous indignation*)
I hope we've all given it up.

BARKER : It was Mr. Hardacre's joke, sir, I think. I often remark to my wife that my health's quite different since I've danced to the Office—some of the way, of course.

TRICKALL : Oh yes, and the medical profession are all with us.

PUSHBY : And Power was right about the singing. He said that rhyme was a matter for the future,

but to make our tongue trip as fairily as our feet, why that's only commonsense, when you come to think it out.

CARAPACE : It's right I know, but I've always found it the hardest part of business.

PUSHBY : It's made trade one of the noble professions, at any rate. And we thought the whole thing too risky, too rabid, too Ruskin.

CHANTRY : You may call it Ruskin if you like.

MRS. CHANTRY : Oh, my dear, it's real Ruskin in spirit.

CHANTRY : It's none the worse for that. The only chance one has nowadays is to change faster than the world changes—if possible.

PUSHBY : I'm so glad Mrs. Chantry has consented to be co-chairman. Nothing is complete without a woman.

BARKER : (*To MRS. CHANTRY*) I don't know how we managed to struggle on without you as we did.

CARAPACE : You're the main fabric of society now, instead of its embroidery.

MRS. CHANTRY : My husband and I have lived to see many wonderful changes, but we have despaired of finding our daughter again.

TRICKALL : If only Sir Algernon and Moribund could have reformed.

CARAPACE : Transformed, you mean.

TRICKALL : Yes, transformed of course. Anyone can reform.

CHANTRY : Our one hope is Andrew—our butler, you know.

PUSHBY : He's a kind of butler-detective, isn't he ?

MRS. CHANTRY : Oh, Mr. Pushby, he's much more than that. We're the would-be detectives, and he's the mystery.

CARAPACE : Why do you keep him if he's like that ?

MR. CHANTRY : Like that ? Why, he's the maddest person among us. He knows the secrets if any one does. He could square the circle I believe.

MRS. CHANTRY : He takes your orders for eggs like a slave, and sets them before you like Caesar. You speak to him, and he's your butler. It was Andrew who suggested that your partners to-night should be under seventeen.

CHANTRY : You see the idea. However mad one is at heart, one is always liable to a recrudescence of commonsense unless kept in touch with fairy youth.

TRICKALL : Personally, I'm glad. I find large women oppressive to dance with.

(ENTER ANDREW *and announces*)

ANDREW : Miss Fluffy-Ruffles, Miss Rufty Tufty, Miss Silvia Ripple, Miss Stellar Maris, Miss Rosy Dawn. (*They are dressed as fairies.*)

(EXIT ANDREW.)

CHANTRY : You'll keep the clock half an hour short of old age. Ha, ha ! that's a brave show. You'll make fairyland jealous.

MRS. CHANTRY : (*Kissing them*) How pretty you all look. It does me good to see you. There's no need for formal introductions nowadays.

CHANTRY : Select partners, and we'll dance right away. Music, please.

(*Music and a country dance. MR. and MRS. CHANTRY watch, smiling.*)

MUSIC ceases, dancing stops.)

CHANTRY : The palm lounge is on the left.

(*EXEUNT all save MR. and MRS. CHANTRY.*)

MRS. CHANTRY : As the first dance is over I'll get the band a little refreshment.

CHANTRY : So soon ?

MRS. CHANTRY : My dear, they're musicians !

CHANTRY : I forgot they're sons of Apollo. Fire has a thirsty tongue. I'll help you.

(*EXEUNT MR. and MRS. CHANTRY. ENTER ANDREW, APRIL and POWER.*)

ANDREW : This way, please. I will announce your arrival.

(*Looks at them hard and gives a wave of the hand.*)

EXIT.)

POWER : (*Staring wildly at APRIL*) Why it's you !
You that I've been seeking. I've found you at
last. I had almost despaired. It seemed like seeking
a creation of my own soul.

APRIL : (*Breathing hard*) I *knew* I should find you.
I recognised you dimly in the maze.

POWER : And that was why my whole being sprang
forward to meet you.

APRIL : And you remember now ?

POWER : You bring back something to me.

APRIL : I can hear a voice saying (*Presses temples*)
Oh, what does it say ? (*Speaks slowly*) You will
find each other in the Land of Opportunity.

POWER : Yes, yes, I understand. We have lived
before, loved before, suffered before, you and I,
here on Earth, and now at last we have met again.
(*Clasps her*).

APRIL : Oh, it was worth the parting to meet like
this—almost.

POWER : You are my dream-face.

APRIL : And you mine.

POWER : (*Kissing rapturously*) To think we have had
to live years apart.

APRIL : The future is ours.

POWER : I have always felt that on some wonderful
day I should meet all I desired.

APRIL : (*Smiling*) And yet you despaired.

POWER : Not deep down. The secret was only buried.
And now my life is completed in you ; there is
nothing more.

APRIL : (*With far away look*) Nothing more ?

POWER : What possible, sweet April ?

APRIL : (*Wistfully*) I wonder how many lovers are
seeking each other.

POWER : I understand. We have found each other
to help those to find each other who are seeking
still.

APRIL : I suppose the World is just a huge place of
parted lovers.

(ENTER MR. and MRS. CHANTRY.

POWER *steps back.*)

MRS. CHANTRY : (*Excitedly*) What did Andrew say ?
—April !

APRIL : (*Embracing*) Mother dear ! (*Embraces MRS.*
CHANTRY *and weeps a little*) Father dear !

CHANTRY : April, pet, where have you been ?

MRS. CHANTRY : All these years.

CHANTRY : These long years.

APRIL : (*Perplexed*) In a maze.

MRS. CHANTRY : A maze ?

APRIL : Oh, at a Fair, going round and round, doing
the same things again and again. I was so tired.

MRS. CHANTRY : I should think so.

CHANTRY : You married Sir Algernon ?

APRIL : Yes.

MRS. CHANTRY : And where is he ?

APRIL : (*Sadly*) He went to sleep on the whirly-gig, and never woke up again.

CHANTRY : And you were left alone unhappy ?

APRIL : I am happy now. Radiantly happy. I have found my sweet mother and father, and I have found—— (*Turns smiling and stretches out hand towards POWER, who comes forward.*)

CHANTRY : Bless my soul alive, Power !

MRS. CHANTRY : Why, Mr. Power !

POWER : (*Shaking hands with MR. and MRS. CHANTRY*) Mr. and Mrs. Chantry, I need your forgiveness for my long desertion.

CHANTRY : Forgiveness ? Why it was you who made us mad. How could we have started the Freemasons' Trading Guild ? How could we have transformed ourselves and this happy England without dancing away our gouty stolidity ? We owe you everything.

POWER : (*Looking at APRIL*) If I remember rightly you said it was your daughter who first set you dancing.

CHANTRY : April ?

MRS. CHANTRY : (*To CHANTRY*) He means when

you danced to the office. Don't you remember dancing down the hard bacon? You *said* it was hard.

CHANTRY: So I did. I danced to the Board Meeting. I'd almost forgotten.

POWER: She set the pace, you see.

(ENTER DIRECTORS *with partners.*)

CHANTRY: (*Excitedly*) What do you think, brothers—Mr. Power, my daughter.

VOICES: Brother Power! Brother Power! Miss Chantry!

CARAPACE: (*Nudging co-director*) Pish! Lady Legally.

APRIL: (*With sad smile*) April Chantry, please, for to-night. You will soon call me by another name.

MRS. CHANTRY: April! What *do* you mean?

HARDACRE: A new name?

APRIL: No, an old one.

CARAPACE: Riddles, rhymes, fairies.

CHANTRY: Explain, April.

APRIL: Mr. Power shall explain.

POWER: (*Taking her hand*) Is an explanation necessary?

MRS. CHANTRY: I think not.

CHANTRY: I think I speak for my brothers when I say we are very glad.

VOICES : Hear, hear.

CARAPACE : I shall begin to think that life ends happily like a fairy tale.

APRIL : Why, of course it does, Mr. Carapace.

BARKER : There's a good deal of scepticism about that round our way ; especially Forest Gate.

POWER : That's only because they want to clap before the end of the play. The third Act must have a great curtain.

PUSHBY : And there's many people who haven't learnt to dance yet.

TRICKALL : Not dance properly, just jazz.

CHANTRY : Oh, you must watch us dance now, my dear Power, and see the difference.

MRS. CHANTRY : Mr. Power and April must lead.

CHANTRY : Yes, lead, and keep an eye open.

APRIL : (*Kissing the children*) What lovely fairies you've got to dance with. You ought to dance well.

POWER : (*To CHANTRY*) You and Mrs. Chantry must join too then.

MRS. CHANTRY : I'm not as mad as I should be.

CHANTRY : You're mad enough inside. It's only that you lose your breath.

(*They are about to start when there is a faint peal of bells.*)

APRIL : Listen ! How lovely !

HARDACRE : I have a ringing in my ears. I never could take quinine.

VOICES : So have I.

APRIL : (*To POWER*) What is it, Merl ?

POWER : I'm not sure, my sweet April.

APRIL : How sad and joyous. It's like memory and prophecy.

(*ENTER ANDREW dressed like a King.*)

MRS. CHANTRY : Andrew !

CHANTRY : I beg your pardon.

ANDREW : There is no need.

(*Waves his hand. SCENE changes to the Court of the King of Hearts.*)

APRIL : (*Gazing at ANDREW and clasping her hands*)
The King !

POWER : The King of Hearts.

KING : Dance on. Yours is the new note I have come to sound ; the new word I have come to speak—Joy. Some of you have helped to bring it and are of my company, the joy-bringers. (*To APRIL and POWER*) Your wedding-day is at hand, and the World's wedding-day is at hand. Is it strange ? Does December tell of May ? The World, too, has its May-time ; and the human heart is that Summer's perfect rose, and when it blooms it will set life aglow and make the whole world fragrant.

CHANTRY : Brothers, the Master.

(They kneel.)

KING : *(To DIRECTORS)* I have come because you tried to dance instead of walk ; and tried to sing instead of talk ; tried to trade as true masons. *(Pointing to APRIL and POWER)* And these twin souls have tried to remember and blow their pipe for all. *(To APRIL and POWER)* And so you have found each other and heard the mighty music that is always sounding.

APRIL : Shall we forget ?

KING : Look and listen for me in all around, then you will remember the music and find the King of Hearts.

(SCENE reverts. ANDREW disappears.)

CARAPACE : *(Staring round very hard)* What is the scientific name for an extraordinary kind of something suddenly and then——

HARDACRE : *(Clearing his throat)* I believe it ends with phobia.

APRIL : Listen !

(A faint chime of bells.)

, CURTAIN

PRISMATIC GLASS
VERSES AND SONNETS

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PRISMATIC GLASS

VERSES AND SONNETS

THE ORIEL OF DREAMS

At her oriel of dreams is she
Weaving and weaving the sunrise gold
Of hope to the far-off break of a sea
And the wealth of life untold.

A dream-thronged fabric floating fair,
Wonder's aureole shimmering gold,
And the far sea's breaking caught on the air,
From an infinite world untold.

'Tis a rainbow weft that she fingers,
Sea-tears and sunny gold,
In the high dawn-calm that lingers
Ere the legend of life is told.

There in the marvel of Morning,
Touched with Eternity's peace,
She loses herself in the dawning,
And her fingers a moment cease.

She has woven a thing of splendour,
Cinctured with crimson rain,
A robe by the blood-line slender,
Slashed with passion and pain.

Beauty, a raiment gracious,
Infinite fold on fold,
Vesture of Heaven spacious
For the girdle of Earth to hold.

Down from her oriel now steps she,
Clothed with her dreams of sunrise gold,
While the million murmurs of the sea
Have called her to things untold.

The great grave gods, one presence of might,
Like mountains half in heaven withdrawn,
Stand round her full of ancient Night
And charged with buoyant Morn.

They see the way that she must go,
They know the message of the sea,
The agelong human cry they know
And silent Deity.

That bitter cry ! Divinely well
They hear, they comprehend,
Their smile, so tender-stern, would tell
The silence and the end.

Dim bluebell woods she threads nor wists she sighs,
Slowly as one sleep-walking haunts apart,
When lo ! the princely passion of answering eyes,
Her dream desire of heart.

Then comes a festal day, she drives along ;
Flags, faces, wild acclaiming without pause ;
Borne on the tingling throne of the huge throng,
Through ocean-roll and roar of the applause.

Affluent Summers proffering royal cheer,
Her soul a flattered guest, and then and then
Disease and destitution, gloomy fear,
Lone weariness and insolence of men.

Or now she ponders deep : some law profound
Of secret Nature flashes through the brain,
Gives power to man, sets free the spirit bound,
Half conquering the tyranny of pain.

And now she battles ; Fate with seeming ire
Blasts as she builds ; all fails, she battles still,
The giant world's resistance raising higher
The voltage of the will.

And now monotony, a desert wide,
Chokes up the soul with sand,
Then sudden hope as suddenly denied,
The mirage-disappointment of the land.

Through sleepless nights she lies, the living-dead,
In coils of serpents, shapes of darkness fell,
While asp and adder sting the heart and head
With poisonous hates of Hell.

She has known a city's hot wind,
The swirling of passion and power,
The dance of the joys of the hour,
Frantic and fervid and blind.

Queen for a moment brief,
High on the wave of the world,
On its Venus-crest that is hurled
Into broken foam on a reef.

Time-tossed she seeks for a treasure,
Some gem or word or face,
Hidden deeper than pleasure,
Hidden higher than place.

Her raiment is faded dreams,
Her feet stir faded leaves,
'Mid chilly winds and scattered sheaves,
Grey gleams and mournful streams.

And love in the forest found,
Has it not gone forever ?
Forever and forever,
In turbulent waters drowned.

.

Again she sees the dawning,
But not through rainbow tears ;
No weft with crimson warning
Of stormy hopes and fears.

The sea that has murmured its story
Is a calm of crystal light,
And her robe a robe of glory
Commingled to perfect white.

And love like a prince without pity,
Who won her life to depart,
Is crowned in a far-off city,
The kingdom within her heart.

Star o'er the mountain shining,
What tremulous rapture to tell?
A light from the eyes divining
The end of love is well.

And the great gods smile, ordaining
That all things meet and blend
In the Mystery of attaining
The silence and the end.

SAND AND PINE AND
CHANNEL FOAM

“Yet why repine?
Created as we are for joy and rest,
Albeit to find them only
Lodged in the bosom of eternal things.”

—Wordsworth.

Sand and pine and channel foam,
Here the toiler finds a home,
Here the wanderer finds a rest
Ere his feet are onward pressed,

Ere again he pass to storm
 Driven o'er his battling form,
 Till the great Peace clasp him round
 Like a dear friend lost and found,
 When no word is fit to break
 Deepest stillness for love's sake,
 And full flood communion lies
 In blissful hands and earnest eyes.

Teach me, tell me, spirit mine,
 How repose and toil combine,
 How to rest when tempests rave,
 How to poise upon the wave,
 How to carol on the wing,
 Contemplate while conquering,
 Move amid the crowded mart
 Busy, with a hermit's heart,
 Wooing with a kiss Defeat
 Till it cry : I love thee, Sweet ;
 Face with laughing trust sublime
 The sudden lion-ramp of Time,
 Wake each day's dead commonplace
 To life that thrills with cleansing grace,—
 And one child-hand forever given
 To the viewless saints of Heaven.

Teach me, teach me, Spirit mine,
 The art, beyond all arts, divine,
 Skill, all other skill above,
 The perfect genius, how to love.
 Trust and laughter, calm and zest,
 Each is good, but Love is best,
 Each is Love in varying vest,

Love the living naked breast
 Deeply veiled for one alone,
 Whose passion claims it for his own,
 And ungirdled to the eyes
 Of martyrdom and sacrifice .
 That charged with such a vast desire
 It burns, a Presence of pure fire.

Teach me this, and through the storm
 I shall touch a bosom warm,
 Find the closed eyes of eclipse
 Fervent dark for fervent lips,
 Till, O Love, the swoon of death
 Becomes the crisis of thy breath.

THE LITTLE BALLADE OF
 MARY STUART

Why beats the heart when its hour has fled ?
 All life in a moment, let Time outrun,
 Day after day wanes round my head,
 Dead sameness of things that are done and said,
 Passionless unsacramental bread :

Kyrie eleison.

Love is so fair ! . . . Yea, fair in fears,
 All love in a moment, let Time outrun,
 There are eternal ties in tears,
 Secrets hid from the ravage of years,
 And words through ruin the heart still hears :

Kyrie eleison.

I will wander a dreary Land ;
 All bliss in a moment, let Time outrun,
 They who have loved not ne'er understand
 The life that is lived in the touch of a hand,
 In meeting and parting the world that is spanned :
 Kyrie eleison.

Ah, but they say a woman is slight :
 One moment of madness, let Time outrun ;
 Well knows she of love the depth and height,
 The crown of its anguish and delight,
 Its mystery folded as heaven in night :
 Kyrie eleison.

Cold is this bosom, driving the rain,
 We loved one moment, let Time outrun,
 After the fever of lips so fain
 In stillness our eyes spake yet more plain
 What rapture itself could not contain :
 Kyrie eleison.

O Death, I have felt thy bitterest sting ;
 We live by moments though steady sands run ;
 O Woman's Heart, thou weary thing,
 O Christ, my tender Saviour, King,
 Redeem this suffering love I bring :
 Christi eleison.

THE GLORY

Only to know you
 Is truly the Feast of Love,
 I pour a libation to

The high gods who dwell above ;
 I fling the red wine o'er
 A cold world of snow
 Till it melts to the live core—
 Its warm heart below.

Your charms beyond kisses
 Unveil to my view
 Some soul fortune misses ;
I give not—'tis you :
 Yes, your love, O dearest,
 Illumines another,
 And because you are nearest,
 Less distant my brother.

Merely to know you
 Is nearer to Love,
 Praise the gods who bestow you
 Awhile from above.

LINES TO SIMPLICITY

Who could ever flatter thee ?
 Exquisite Simplicity !
 Star and bird and wayside flower,
 Recollected childhood's hour,
 Home and play and sleepy cot,
 Garden swing and orchard plot,
 Laughing babe and babbling brook,
 Dancing eyes and that first look
 Interchanged, however fleet,
 Teaching the heart the way to beat ;

A nosegay picked in toil for one
That love recalls in the hot sun :
Wild things gambolling at gloaming,
Freedom, sunrise-shod, for roaming,
Friendship, sharing the same way,
Eloquent, undoubting, gay.

How may I be worthy thee ?
Vestal fire, Simplicity,
Virgin of Heaven, unbeguiled,
So utter fair, so utter fresh,
As Mary mild in wonder wild,
Breathing with God-transported flesh.
Lowly heart and single mind,
Single mind and lowly heart,
And Innocence, the morning wind
Of vermeil Youth, all all are part
Of thee, O child of Earth and Sky
And thrice-baptismal purity,
While golden glory's dazzling dress
Obscures thy naked loveliness.
The ranks of Power and Splendour starred,
Bow down and range around, thy guard,
Thunder and trumpet, lute and lyre,
And song, the articulate soul of fire,
The conscious voice of an infinite choir
Gathering the seas of the world in its tone
To the thousand Te Deums and tongues of the Throne,
Hail thee, all hail thee, a child that is crowned,
Proclaim thee, adore thee, the sought for, the found.
O tender in the human face,
Very grace of very grace,
That upward glance of rapture's flight,

Half daisy, half seraphic light,
And all that human eyes can be ;
Sweet, human-sweet, Simplicity.

Bleats the new-born lamb of thee,
Harmless white Simplicity,
Gentle Christ lived thee anew,
Francis, saint of pity, too,
Making life one act to be,
The prayer of Simplicity.

I would find thee in my heart,
Hard to win, a thing apart,
Seeking from all eyes no cover,
Yet how coy to thy true lover
If he outlives fairy youth
Till sand and thorns are cynic-truth,
And only mirage-beauty shows
The desert blossom as the rose.
Time's touch is slow corruption cold,
But Life as parents worn and old—
Grandparents gladdening their last days
With little lives and winning ways—
Grows young near thee, grows fond again ;—
O child of love the years had slain,
O Heart of all, Simplicity,
I dedicate myself to thee.

LOVE AND WISDOM ?

Ever one that loves thee well,
One among the many,
Words have little power to tell,
Little power or any,

So it seems when I would say
How I love thee day by day.

Am I wise to love thee well
If no hope can blossom ?
Love that only touch might tell
Of hands and lips and bosom,
Love not even touch could tell
All its secret miracle.

Happy lovers who can move
In passion's freedom duly,
With joyous privilege to prove
Their troth each morning newly :
Christ who teaches angels love
Teach me sternly, truly.

Through the long years of the past
Winding slowly, sadly,
Have I come to thee at last
To adore too madly ?
If it be not good and wise,
Belovèd, drown me in those eyes.

TO PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

“ COR CORDIUM ”

“ What surprised us all was that the heart remained entire. ”
—*Extract from Trelawny's account of the cremation.*

Did earthly fire refuse
To burn that wondrous heart,
That presence chamber of the Muse
In which she breathed her art ?

'Tis sooth where love has flamed,
 Its holy power is such
 The tiger elements are tamed
 And will not, dare not touch.

For wrath has only might
 And dominance o'er dross,
 While love's pure gold is sovereign light
 That can endure no loss.

Minstrel, if great Apollo
 Has graver sons divine,
 Thou among all that follow
 Art darling of the Nine.

Thou hast an Earthly throng,
 O prince of Youth's empire,
 Whose spirit was a sword for wrong,
 For love creative fire.

A sudden light indeed,
 An unknown comet fair,
 Streaming the flame of thine own speed,
 A living message rare.

'Tis said the Sibyl's grace
 Was nor of Greece nor woman,
 But passion-charmed a heavenly race
 Became the tragic-human.

And thus from these were born
 A race of human-kind
 Like tongues of fire, like sea forlorn,
 And wilder than the wind.

The great unwisely-wise,
 With daring wings unfurled,
 Gilding the pavements with the skies,
 The changelings of the world.

Such art thou, Zeus's seed,
 Flashed from the brow of Truth,
 Torch-Bearer to the dark World's need ;
 O sempiternal Youth !

NEAR AND DEAR

Near and dear, near and dear,
 Life of this life in me,
 Dear, dear, darkly dear,
 Precious unfathomably.
 Thy thought warm-flowing within me here,
 Out-flowing from me to thee.

High tide and low tide
 Lift and fall and lift,
 Golden waves and silver waves,
 And undercurrents swift,
 And ground-swells brimmed with mystery
 From mighty billows far out at sea.

Ever wooed and never won,
 Encompassed, yet lo ! thou art free,
 An endless adventure still daring love on,
 Thou laughest at victory ;
 In Paradise—the blue bliss of thine eyes—
 Beckons infinity.

As a bee's flight to the Queen's height,
With all its being's breath,
So love's quest is life's quest
In a passion of bridal and death :
Divine defiance flung from above,
The challenge of wild love.

RESPONSE

When the light wind stirs the tree
What is that which stirs in thee ?
Mystery, O mystery !

Passion swaying to and fro,
Vastly, vaguely, swept with woe,
Terribly, despairingly.

Anguish-shaken by World-pain,
Straining, striving, spent in vain,
Wearily, how wearily.

Rustling secrets half divine
Of tranced Nature sibylline,
Dreamily, O dreamily !

Like a maenad in the storm
Thy leaf flung from maddened form,
Frenziedly, abandonedly.

Softly wooed on Summer eves,
Ripple all thy laughing leaves,
Joyously, O joyously !

Lissom as a maiden seen
 Dimpled, dancing on the green,
 Winsomely, how winsomely.

Secret sorrow, magic mirth,
 Whispering wonders of the Earth,
 Eeriely, how eeriely.

Crooked signs of thy branched bole
 Beckoning the hidden soul
 Covertly, how covertly.

Till from deeps so slow to move
 Bursts the answer—love, love, love :
 And my heart breaks for thee, my love.

LOVE'S NIRVANA

I ? Seek elsewhere ? No, never !
 What are years, lives, centuries ?
 Let the breath go out of many bodies,
 Abides my purpose ever,
 Sets the timeless on your charms,
 Even so I wait, your lover,
 For the moment of moments
 When I hold you in my arms.

The many smile upon you,
 But I wait through the ages,
 Wait through the ages for you
 And win you at the last,
 And then the pent-up past
 Its tidal wave will roll in ;
 And because I endured through the ages
 I shall win you at the last.

Like a mighty stilled throng waiting
Comes the threshold moment due,
After World-wrack long abating
Now I sleep to all but you,
In a night of solemn starlight,
Smiling on love's past alarms,
Falls the angels' veil around us
For I hold you in my arms.

MOONRISE AT MIDNIGHT

Moonrise at midnight over the sea
And a tolling bell in the waves,
Low slow moonrise over the sea
And silvery-shivering waves,
And a sigh that shudders across the night
Out of the Past on its lonely flight,
Keeping the vigil of memory
By the moon and the low slow wash of the sea.

Why does the ghost of memory
Walk to-night by the wash of the sea ?
The phantom of drifting Youth it seems,
Wasted in dreams, wasted in dreams,
When life was the morning embrace of a mother
Ere the touch of her felt as the touch that would
smother ;
Is her heart now broken that hoped so high
For her son ?—and the precious years slipped by.

This muffled sea-bell of dreary thought
Tolls for the souls who ne'er gained port,
The lost frail crafts of forgotten name,

Unharbouréd by wealth or love or fame.
 The bitter sea gives up her dead,
 On the coast, perhaps, where the wreck is
 spread—
 O far o'er the pathway of billows bright
 What heavenly haven of welcoming light ?

LINES TO . . .

Can aught be lovelier to know
 Than the first fall of the snow ?
 The dancing flakes to dazzled eye
 That wide upon the landscape lie
 Wrapping all in Winter sleep
 Hushed and smooth in dreaming deep ;
 A stillness made of downy light
 From Contemplation's wings of white.

Is anything more calmly bright
 Than the moon across the sea,
 Gazing, gazing through the night
 On her mirrored majesty ?
 Gently lulling wave and land
 In the spell of her command.

Is there anything more pure
 Than the stream's own lily pale ?
 In delicacy more demure
 Than her sister of the vale ?
 Or holier than the stealing grey
 Of the soft returning day ?

Fairer than the fallen snow,
Gentler than the moon and sea,
Or day or night when most they show
How beautiful the Earth can be
In vestal trance or vernal glow,
The light of thee, the light of thee.

The water's eye returns my gaze,
Thy lily quickens to my praise,
Thy snow's pure calm has listening ears,
And melts to woman's human tears,
The bosom of the deep replies,
Unfathomed passion of tender sighs—
Thou comest as the dawn again
After the World's night of pain.

Clad in radiance, a glow
Of womanhood as white as snow,
Grace from virgin realms of bliss
Mingle in a Mother's kiss ;
Earth and Heaven as bread and wine
On thy loving lips combine,
And who pursues those dancing eyes
Shall find the saint in their blue skies,
The charm, the charm that all men seek,
With something other, queenly meek.

O silent Heaven to which we cry,
That flesh the word of Thy reply,
A heeding Heaven of blue-eyed love
That looks and answers from above ;
No less divine because made human
In eyes and hands and heart of woman.

And while we tarry Thou art there
First at the tryst, the Only Fair ;
The tryst of beauty, and the sweet
Secret place where lovers meet,
Where I am hastening, dear, to thee
To part no more, and where for me
Thy feet the far blest fields have trod ;—
An almoner of the peace of God.

THE AVERAGE FAMILY

How describe it ? What is the tie
The weaving fates give Time as tether
For those that find themselves so nigh ?
Born mysteriously together.

Familiar strangers would you say ?
With here and there some notes that blend
Into the fullness of the friend ?
And the lighter touch of love at play ?

Though widening far the Future's ways
The mutual Past is a bond of power,
The sanctity of early days
Through memory's tender twilight hour.

Have we gathered and supped so oft by chance ?
Or has routine some ritual grace ?
And under the chrysalis commonplace
The folded wings of romance ?

As partners part in the merry dance,
Diverge for the outstretched hand's award,
So each delaying dissonance
Resolves into the richer chord.

And the thrust of the world's aeonian strife
Is the wild arm's length to gaze in pride,
And Time one moment that Love holds Life
To clasp it forever as bridegroom bride.

EVENING BELLS

The chime of the bells that tells
Of a calm far-off delight
Half memory, half prophecy,
Drawn from the heavenly height.

The chime of the bells that swells
Like an angel's cry on the air,
And our lives, as opening evening flowers,
Feel upward in fragrant prayer.

The pleading chime of the spheres
Through the deepening hush above
Till the listening soul of sadness hears
The wild wild call of love.

WORLD-SEASONS

Earth has her seasons and the world has too,
Empires arise and flourish and decay ;
But ere the Sapphic rapture of spring is May,
And conscious of love creation thrills anew,

March storms and bitter winds prepare the way ;
 So look not now with overmuch dismay,
 For spiritual tides 'flow from the blue,
 And we are borne on mighty floods to-day.
 The hall of Pleasure at life's threshold stands,
 Dance ye awhile in it as Summer's flower,
 The hall of Pain bestows a sterner dower,
 Its priestly precincts tell us life's commands ;
 And like Ulysses from seawreck and far lands
 Pass on triumphant to the Hall of Power.

WOMAN : TRUE AND NEW

I sing of Woman as she is to be,
 Clothed with the sun, the moon beneath her feet,
 Glorious and unutterably sweet,
 Gracious, yet mistress of the tidal sea,
 Immaculate in all her ecstasy,
 And starry queen of the heart's swiftest beat
 When flesh and spirit rushing together meet
 And burn away corruptibility.
 Even as a generous horse with iron shod
 Strikes fire from stone, her passion wakes the light ;
 The lustral sense leads heavenward, where she trod
 She moves with wings, knowing herself aright ;
 And rolling through the world a rumour of God
 Thunders at last and flashes blinding bright.

CATHOLICITY

If infinite space and all-embracing air
 Created universal light to shine,
 Shall Truth itself beam down in one slant line
 Leaving the greater World its night to bear ?
 Is this Love, Wisdom, Power ? Yet men dare

Name their impassioned littleness divine ;
 The Samson of sightless force shall never spare
 The inward darkness of this Christless shrine.
 O Church ! Heal thou thyself if thou would'st heal ;
 Hard, narrow thought is stone's idolatry ;
 The sons of God are many, for the eye
 That marks the sparrow beholds the commonweal ;
 The catholic dome of the cathedral sky
 Broods with the boundless fulness of the Real.

RE-CREATION IN EDEN

As one born in a crowded city's slum
 'Mid traffic, trade, noise, hurry and hard speech
 Where gloom and angry apathy but reach
 Lives that despair not, being only numb,
 Vulgarity on void like active scum
 On under-stagnancy, each bound to each,
 And the whole gaze of life fastened to teach
 Trivial, loveless pleasures how to come :
 Then suddenly upon a morn in May,
 Transported to deep forest or wide sea
 And friends whose tenderest society
 Lies at the heart with bliss too dear to say,
 So Heaven shall sweeten Earth this storm-born day,
 And woman and man walk in God's company.

ARIADNE

" How beautiful had not Sorrow made
 Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty's self."
 —Keats.

Alone, deserted, weeping by the tide
 And cold and broken as the broken wave
 Her princess love had been a power to save
 Her faithless prince in perilous mazes wide,

Had given her shining beauty for his bride,
 Beauty Ingratitude takes as the grave,
 E'en as that Love whose anguish none could stave,
 And in Gethsemane's lone garden sighed.

'Tis said that Love's mysterious bridegroom bends
 Above her woe now breathing like the main
 Or little sleeping child with bosom of pain
 That all its strength of early sorrow spends.
 Lo ! to the soul bereft of hope and friends
 Great Dionysius thou standest plain.

ADVENT DURING THE WAR

Familiar, homely heart of common grain,
 The jest on lips, the lighted match in hand,
 Cold, burdened in the rainy world you stand
 With humorous-human deprecations vain :
 One moment smoking, palpable and plain
 The next ?—You, you the simple boy have spanned
 Where Thought no footing finds, again, again
 Returning like the bird that found not land.
 No mystic but the myriad mother I,
 Nor seeking oracle that comforteth ;
 I sit in darkness and the shadow of death,
 Bowed with the World's weight of mortality.
 O Christ !—the great World's greater need, the
 breath
 Of life ; O come ! Thou Dayspring from on high.

WOMANHOOD

Yes, abstract Womanhood can more than be
 A statue of contemplative delight,
 The breathless marble's frigid peak of white

Melts into life before the devotee,
To white fire of divine virginity,
To human motherhood's tenderness and might ;
Beauty the flame that points the infinite
Through love's long play of quivering sym-
metry.

Worshipping thus Man woos the innumerable
As if his wildly yearning heart should say
O gracious maidens of Life's yesterday
And Time's to-morrow, to ye my Pan-pipes
call :

The Spirit of love enfolds, enfolds you all,
And from its circling Heaven none none can
stray.

DESTINY

What mystery, what ordinance is this ?
Wherefore this stern fraternity of fate ?
Not only Petrarch and great Dante wait—
Wait through the ages for one woman's kiss—
Half Minstrelsy's High Priests of passion miss
Life's human touch, or find it cold and late,
While other men seek first the world's estate,
Taking as idle ease Home's sacred bliss.
Arose Apollo in Olympian flame
As Daphne fled so dazzling a desire,
Though lost the fleeting form his arms would
claim,
Deep in her heart she flashes back his fire,
For see, a bride in death, her laurel came
To clasp his brow, to crown and to inspire.

IN MEMORIAM

MY FATHER

With heart still buoyant, conscious of the power
 To grapple further, answer some fresh call,
 The summons came, and swiftly seemed to fall
 The darkness of the unseen angel's hour,
 Or as a sudden mist's unrolling pall
 Blots out the landmark of a feudal tower,
 The strength that gloried in each Morning's dower
 To meet the World's new challenge, great or small.
 Captain or Counsellor of many a fight,
 Roman with Roman virtue, others knew
 A soul of whispering poesy ; a few
 The freakish word of deftly quaint delight ;
 And deeper still a life-long love as true
 In its last look as at its dawning bright.

TO . . .

I

When I recall that we have only spent
 A few brief hours together since we met,
 And then behold within my heart how yet
 Thine image has entered in, and what is meant
 By those slight words, I stand amazed as set
 Upon a threshold, pausing, though innocent
 Because the power of powers there is pent,
 The lowliest and the loftiest to beget.
 Love's World of wildness, pristine, unconfined,
 A World that asks a life, a life entire,

Then burns its mighty need in its own fire
And glows intenser, fed on all resigned ;
In worship wed, while time, cold, exile, wind,
To sanctify and consummate, conspire.

II

Think of the many we meet, and then comes one
Who means—ah me ! Even that one thou art,
An undersong to action's every part,
Clear-sounding when each sober task is done :
Thy face a simple carol, thy hair spun
In frolic free, and bright those glances dart
From daisy-fringe of lashes, while thine heart
Looks upward like the daisy to the Sun.
Sweet flower, sweeter Lady ! Unto such
Who look above like thee come tempests dread ;
Those very hands in beauty thoroughbred
Seem aspiration to the tapering touch :
For thee I plead with Heaven, that pleading much
I shield from breaking storms so dear a head.

III

I love thee and God bless thee : in the sight
Of those in love made perfect am I blamed ?
Not the deep current of Woman's being is claimed
And therefore do I strive to love aright :
So strict the vision I must be ashamed
To seek the least regard as others might,
But only shed my little taper-light
Upon thee from the light of Him love-named.
O Holy Love, lost in sublimity,
O woman's hands and face and eyes and hair,

O human with divine humanity
 How tenderly, how exquisitely fair ;
 I glance from thee to God, from God to thee,
 And thy hand helps me up the golden stair.

IV

Earth's multitudinous brotherhood, I drink
 The cup ye drink, I go the way ye go,
 The weary day-by-day that is not woe,
 Not woe, but numbness : sudden to feel and think
 Naked with joy and pierced by anguish ; lo !
 Like a hurt creature, once again to shrink ;
 Or viewing a promised land ye may not know ;
 Your lives, a stifled cry, ye fail and sink.
 Belovèd, at thy feet I also die,
 Drinking the bitterness of things too sweet,
 From my unwilling lips escapes this cry,
 Fraught with all human feeling and heart-beat ;
 Love is so near to death, behold they meet,
 And thy smile dawns to immortality.

V

How may I tell thy genius ? First I trace
 Genius of beauty, the World's sought-for prize,
 While Wisdom broods o'er beauty, form and face
 And gesture like to winsomeness made wise.
 From Genius's gold aureole of space
 The great Apollo bade such arts arise,
 That speaking, thou commandest ears and eyes,
 A presence enchanting and a channel of grace.
 I have but told of Eloquence's hour,
 Not fingers music-moulded, music-filled,

Nor nature that would droop as a blown flower
Were it not queenly poised and sovereign-willed ;
Yet this I tell, I love thee with love's power,
And this remember till life's breath is stilled.

VI

Though gemmed with gifts, chiefest I have not told,
The guarded secret difficult to speak,
'Tis whispered in thy lips, dawns on thy cheek,
The pulsing rose within thy breast its fold.
Words may not tell in profanation hold
The Paradise where souls are wed who seek :
Thou dwellest there, and I through passion meek,
May rise upguided by thy star's pure gold.
And if I am too frail and thou too far,
Then will thy feet descend to me in prayer,
Draw me from dark divisions to upper air,
Where unblamed love and closest union are ;
And shall we not, like rapturous star round star,
Light severed lovers who seek to enter there ?

VII

I eat, act, sleep and wake in thee anew,
Or tasked awhile, in thee I come to rest :
Say not I shame those words of mystic zest—
Perpetual adoration. Love's eyes view
One beauty undivorced by schisms untrue,
One face of infinite home, of infinite quest,
Whose human smile, divine at loveliest,
Melts as Earth's gracious green in Heavenly blue.
Thy Mother-touch, like tendril-twining green,
I feel upon me, lingeringly own,

All life's relationships, with all they mean
 By me to thee, though ever unknown, are known,
 And wistfully I listen in thy tone
 To things that are not, things that might have been.

VIII

As if a lover wandering in love's dream
 Should meet his radiant lady on his way,
 And hear her sweet discourse on his heart's theme,
 Even thus, O joy! it chanced with me this day.
 Parting I heard thy voice bidding me stay.
 Belovèd! in what fashion canst thou deem
 That I one willing moment from thee stray?
 Unsteadfast? Yes, to others so let it seem.
 And Love who teaches, took itself thy speech,
 In accents blessèd to my eager ear,
 With over-tones through after-silence clear,
 Whispering (the wondrous truth I strove to reach)
 The hearts of love press ever each to each,
 Smile thou farewell, thou canst not be more near.

IX

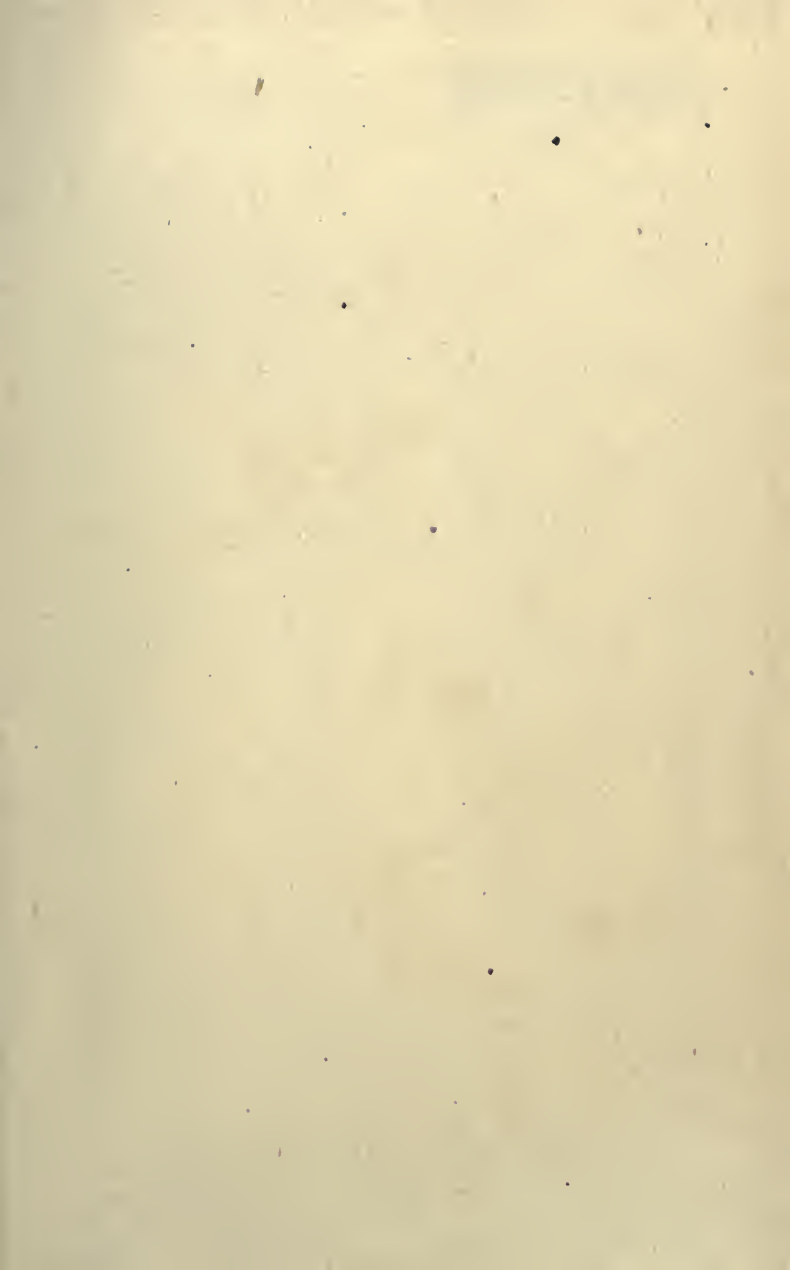
Henceforth thou knowest. Haply thou didst discern
 I loved thee, that most secret sacred thing.
 Naked confession; pleased scorn can fling
 Refined inflictions to pierce or chill or burn.
 Welcome thine every arrow's suffering
 In my bared breast if so thou mayest learn
 The better how I love thee, with the stern
 Rapture and fealty 'tis mine to bring.
 Ah gentlest Lady! Thus I do thee wrong,
 Thou who art both the sunlight and the gloom;

A life to live, a death to die, to whom
Thine own dear flower must glory to belong.
For thee the unloved thistle, passed by the throng,
Puts on the downy semblance of a bloom.

CAMBRIDGE COLLEGES

Stronghold of Knowledge ; sternly studious walls,
Steeped in the pensive twilight's sober grey,
Communing with the mighty Past always,
And spirit of saintly scholarship that falls
Like sunlight smiling on the courts of May :—
Youth, gathering to greatness, trod these halls,
Whose rallying voice through the rich silence calls
To sons who wrestle with a later day.
Not frozen Learning's proud pedantic brood
Laid here one hallowed stone, 'twas light divine
Shone from that torch uplifted for Man's good,
And warm with Wisdom kindled at Love's shrine ;
Chartered by Heaven, an august brotherhood
With sovereignty for services benign.

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